



The World and the Stars

Tanith Lee, Deborah Jay, Paul Laville, Cherith Baldry, Liz Williams, Stephen Gaskell, Liz Counihan, Matt Colborn, Chris Butler

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Twenty-four of the most exciting voices in genre fiction bring you the world and the stars, each in their own individual way. Stories that explore the vast grandeur of the universe, worlds close to us, worlds far in the distance. Alternate Earths, colonies in the sky, engineered worlds, mystical battlegrounds, pirate seas, underground caverns, journeys in time and across the stars. In *ONDRALUME* (Tanith Lee) two sisters, Ondain and Unniet, plead with the gods to bring rain to their parched and dying land. But can their sacrifice save their people? The answer might come from another world, or from the stars. In *SUBSTITUTES*, (Colin P. Davies) offworlders have come to Earth, and Melinda and her Dad are on the run. She sees patterns everywhere, in the stars or in the bubbling water of a stream — but what does this signify, and where will it lead? *GLITTERING SPIRES* (Elizabeth Counihan) merges Science Fantasy and Austen sensibilities to playful effect. A young princess might well have to navigate not just the mores of her society, but also the wild, fabulous rogues and creatures that inhabit her world. In *THE BATTERY CAVERNS*, (Nigel Brown) Jak is a member of a clan living within the labyrinthine tunnels of his ‘world’. Conditions are worsening, and fearsome raiding parties from other clans are scavenging for the precious battery pods. To survive, Jak must learn the true nature of his environment, and the cause of the seismic tremors that threaten to tear it apart. In *DUSKING*, (Liz Williams) a young girl, Emily, longs to escape the watchful gaze of her aunt. But if she goes out into the woodland at night, to see what can be captured there, she might find something darker and more primal than she bargained for. *GOLTY'S BURROW* (Paul Laville) is found on an engineered world that has suffered through a technology Armageddon. Races clash in the ruins, fighting for survival. An evolutionary stalemate needs to be broken if things are to change. But as Lorni and her twin, Prilly, discover, everything has a cost. *PERFECT FIT* (Deborah Jay) follows a starship travelling to a planet to colonise. But as time passes and resources dwindle, the promised world has not been found. The ‘splicers’ rely on genotech to keep the ship going, but for how long will the inhabitants of the ship tolerate their rule? In *TEN THOUSAND MOONS OF HOWLING*, (Gareth Caradoc Owens) the Warchief Olambur stands with his army and priests at the border of the mortal world and the land of the dead, Nuji Giya. To repel the rising dead, Olambur is commanded to give up the Lord of Wits, Din Yirgish. Alliances are forged and battles fought, but in a war between gods and mortals there are bound to be casualties. *THE DISAPPEARED* (Sarah Singleton) presents us with Britain preparing for war, with paranoia all around. An invitation to the Blue Cat café might well be an enticing proposition, but a reporter should be careful where his curiosity might lead. In *MICRO EXPRESSIONS*, (Stephen Gaskell) a woman asks to cross a border, to pay homage and pray. But is that her true purpose? A decision must be made to grant or deny her passage. Might the first tentative steps towards a better world be there for the taking? *THE COURT OF HIGH RENOWN* (Cherith Baldry) takes us to a mysterious enclave, shaped by its Queen and her Court. But is everything within the castle and the surrounding forest as unreal as it seems? And is there anything beyond the fading horizon? *THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS* (Peter T. Garratt) reinterprets the events of Homer’s epic poems to tell a somewhat different tale of Odysseus’ journey, of what happened when he failed to return, and what happened when he did return. Perhaps the harrowing *WE SHELTER* (Leigh Kennedy) occurs in the future, or maybe its story is universal and timeless. It is all too easy to imagine that the sick and dying are somehow less than human. Plus many more...

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