

News from SF writer Lance Robinson

There's no such thing as cold (But it's still a good idea to light a fire)

One of the basic truths of physics that struggles to find a comfortable home in my brain is that there is no such thing as *cold*. *Heat* is a real thing—it exists and affects the world. *Cold* is merely the absence of heat. Thinking of *cold* as an actual, tangible entity in its own right leads to mistaken thinking. Touch pieces of metal and wood that are at the same temperature, and you'll think the metal is colder, or perhaps that it has more "coldness". But what's real in that situation is heat, and the transfer of heat happening more efficiently in the metal than in the wood.

But I'm originally from Saskatchewan, and when the temperature outside is -35°C and the wind is blowing, *cold* feels pretty frickin' real.

Part of the problem, I suppose, is language. In English, and most other languages, the easiest way to describe why you shouldn't leave the door open when it's -35 outside is to talk about "letting the cold in," when really you're letting *the heat out*.

Lately, I've been thinking about how the same thinking might apply to concepts like *love* and *hate*, *justice* and *injustice*, *peace* and *conflict*. And of course when questions like this make me wonder, my reaction is to write a story.

What mistakes do we make when we focus on fighting injustice and hate instead of nurturing justice and love? What if justice was not just a label we apply to certain social conditions, but something as tangibly real as gravity and electromagnetism? How does evil trick us into believing it's powerful?

These are questions I've been digging into in the most recent short stories I've written and in the novel I'm working on now. Here's what I've come up with so far:

Lately, evil feels pretty frickin' real. Minus 35 Celsius can kill you if you're not prepared for it, so you should take it seriously. In the same way, we need to take evil and injustice seriously, and shouldn't be naïve about it. Look around. It's hard to deny that there's a whole heap of injustice and preventable suffering in the world right now. Nor does it take the power of prophesy to see that collectively as a human race we've arranged the world so that more suffering is coming down the pipeline.

But ultimately, darkness is powerless against a lantern, and -35 is powerless against a well-insulated house and a crackling fireplace. There are uncountable little lights piercing through the darkness and starting to shine more brightly—seeds of love, justice, and interconnectedness that are already sprouting up through the rubble of dying ideas.

As a science fiction writer, I'm finding hope as I imagine what those seeds might soon sprout into, and what the world will look like when love, justice, and unity are burning hot enough to banish the cold that I'm feeling right now.

What I'm Working on Now

Several weeks ago I set aside the novel I've been working on to write some short stories. The results are now out in search of a magazine or anthology to call home.

But it was time to get back to the novel, so last week I cracked it open again. It's a prequel to my *Writers of the Future* winning story "Five Days Until Sunset". Have you heard of the Gaia hypothesis—the idea that the totality of all life on Earth together with Earth's physical systems—the atmosphere, hydrosphere, and soils—constitute a super-organism. The novel's core *What If?* speculation is a new twist on that idea.

Latest Publication

"Money, Wealth, and Soil" is a near-future story of an environmental watchdog scientist who cares deeply about nature but who doesn't think much of human beings. It was originally published in *Analog Science Fiction & Fact* in 2024, but now has it also been included in the anthology *Think Weirder: The Year's Best Science Fiction Ideas*. <https://thinkweirder.com/>.



How to Support a Writer

If you've read my work and enjoyed it, please consider doing one or more of the following:

- If you've read *Chasing New Suns*, *Think Weirder Vol. 1*, or *Writers of the Future Vol. 40*, write an honest review on Amazon, Goodreads, or some other platform. Reviews drive the algorithms of these platforms and help other readers discover me.
- Go into a bookstore or library with the *Chasing New Suns* ISBN number (978-1-0688724-0-2) and ask them if they have it in stock or can get it.
- If you've read something of mine and liked it, don't be shy to send me a note telling me what you liked about it.



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