

National Storytelling Network

VOLUME 8 • ISSUE 2 • FEBRUARY 2026

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

DOROTHY CLEVELAND NAMED NSN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Rishi Nixon
President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

I am pleased to announce this month, the Board of Directors voted 8–0 to designate Dorothy Cleveland Executive Director of the National Storytelling Network.

This comes in recognition of Dot continuing her critical, long-running part-time administrative service to NSN through a tumultuous post-pandemic restructuring and financial revitalization for our organization several years ago, as well as taking on the mantle of NSN's chief staff member and primary point of contact for the membership.



Dot is a two-time ORACLE award recipient and former board treasurer of both the National Storytelling Network and Story Arts of Minnesota. She retired in 2015 after serving as chief operating officer of a Minneapolis law firm for 25 years. She holds an MLS in Leadership Through Story from the University of Minnesota.

I also want to take this moment to emphasize the National Storytelling Network's unreserved support of the Minnesota storytelling community, and our partner organization [Story Arts of Minnesota](#), in their use of their voices to speak the truth about what their community is experiencing in the wake of two unjustified tragedies.

Dot is performing in Storytelling.org's Moonshine Stories Solidarity Concert featuring Minnesota storytellers. I encourage you to buy a ticket or recording to hear their stories and support both Dot and the tellers she is telling alongside, at [this link](#).

IN THIS ISSUE:

President's Letter

2026 Conference

Winter Auction for Member Grants

2026 Fringe Selected

Kathryn Tucker
Windham Scholarship

In Memoriam: Doug Lipman

Member Notes

Featured Events

National Storytelling Calendar

The Story Beast

DID YOU KNOW?

NSN Board of Directors meetings are open to all members!

Read minutes and learn how to attend [here](#).



PRAIRIE VOICES

HONORING HERITAGE, INSPIRING TOMORROW

National Storytelling Conference
West Texas A&M University

JULY 23-26
CANYON, TX



NATIONAL
STORYTELLING
NETWORK

REGISTRATION OPEN MARCH 1

PLAN NOW:
JOIN US FOR NSN'S 50TH YEAR!

MEMBER GRANTS PROGRAM

DONATE TO THE NSN ONLINE AUCTION & MEMBER GRANTS BENEFIT BY FEBRUARY 9th!...



Kate Dudding & Marilyn McPhie
Auction Co-Chairs
National Storytelling Network

Maybe you're organizing, and you find items that could use a new home?

Maybe you received a gift that's not quite you? Maybe you're just feeling generous?

All good reasons to donate to the auction. In the past, the online NSN auctions have made over \$6000! All donations will go to fund member grants.

What makes a good auction item? Items from your extensive travels, handicrafts, art, jewelry, books, and clothing do well. Services like coaching, performing, tickets to events are also popular. You may think of something no one else has ever considered!

You can find the details about the auction and information on donating here:

storynet.org/online-auction

The process is pretty simple. Just fill out the form here:

bit.ly/nsn26-auction-donation

And then email a photo, logo, etc. to Kate Dudding here:

kate@katedudding.com

The deadline for donations is **February 9**—so now's the time to donate.

Questions? Let me know.

Marilyn McPhie

858-337-0990

marilynmcphie.com



Raise Funds for Member Grants!

Winter 2026 Online

AUCTION

Feb. 23 – Mar. 6 

Donation Form	bit.ly/nsn26-auction-donation Forms accepted Jan. 9 – Feb. 9
Auction	32auctions.com/nsn26
Info	storynet.org/online-auction

2026 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

FRINGE TELLERS SELECTED FOR 2026 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE



Barbara Schutzgruber & Loren Niemi
Fringe Co-Chairs
National Storytelling Network

The nine fringe tellers have been drawn for this year's NSN conference. 22 entered the lottery.

Ric Vice • *Windwagon Smith and Sam Peppard the Tall Tale and the Legend Behind It*

"Windwagon Smith", the tall tale has its roots in the true story of blacksmith, Sam Peppard, who sailed an actual "windwagon" from Oskaloosa, Kansas to within miles of Ft. Collins, Colorado.

Larry Castleberry • *38 years of Aikido*

Follow the life of an Aikido student, from enthusiastic youthful beginner, to a nearing 60 year old still training (but oh he moves so much slower now!!)

Linda Batlin • *The Story of Doc Susie, Colorado's Mountain Doctor*

Hear about Colorado's first woman doctor in Fraser, Colorado. Learn about her challenges and triumphs in treating lumberjacks, ranchers and railroaders of the area over many years and about a way of life that is gone.

Paul Strickland • *Eavesdropping on the Dead*

Dark, sometimes funny, always gripping tales from long ago. Strange old stories, reupholstered for contemporary audiences, carried into unlikely rooms and told like they still matter—because they absolutely do.

Denise McCormack • *We Have Always Known Better*

Old stories have a way of rising up when we need them most. Shared in a relaxed and engaging style, Denise McCormack shakes out a few dust-covered tales from our collective memory—tales meant to linger with us as new companions, each offering well-meaning pages from life's little instruction booklet that we might keep and revisit again and again.

Walt Belcher • *Scallywag of the Scrubs: Tales of The Orneriest Cow Wrangler in Florida History*

Bone Mizell could outride, outshoot, out wrangle, out talk, out drink and out prank any cowboy of his era (1863 to 1921), and I've got stories to back it up.

Tim Ereneta & Sufian Zhemukhov • *Tales of the Narts*

The Nart sagas are to the Caucasus what Greek mythology is to Western civilization. Come hear ancient tales collected and passed down at the crossroads between Europe and Asia.

Les Schaffer • *"Ought Not Remember, Mustn't Forget: Hasidic stories from the Baal Shem Tov, to Chelm, the Shoah and beyond"*

Hasidic stories, from the Baal Shem Tov, Chelm fools, shtetl Tzadiks, the darkness and flame of the Holocaust to today. Stories of survival, terror, bravery, unimaginable loss, intense joy.

Ty Fance • *Becoming Ty - Part One*

Storytelling performance featuring poignant, humorous and heartfelt stories from my life. A journey, vivid in sense of time and place, of family connections and the environment that influenced me.

2026 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

APPLY FOR THE 2026 KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIP



Margaret Read MacDonald
Chair, Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholarship Committee
National Storytelling Network

The 2026 National Storytelling Conference will be held July 23–26, 2026 at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. We encourage a diverse range of tellers — whether experienced or brand new, NSN member or non-member, storytelling professional or emerging teller — to apply for the Windham scholarship.

NEW for 2026 CYCLE! We are setting aside two of the five Windham Scholarships for new tellers (those who have been involved in the art of storytelling for less than ten years). We hope to encourage tellers new to the field to attend our annual conference and become involved in NSN.

This application is due **March 7th, 2026**. Scholarship attendees will be notified of their application status by the end of that month.

Conference Scholarship Benefits

- One year of membership to the National Storytelling Network
- Free registration to the full conference (including the regional, national, and ORACLE awards concerts)
- Free on-campus housing for the full conference, possibly with a roommate (of your choice, if another conference attendee)
- Free meals at the campus dining hall

Please note that the scholarship does not cover transportation to West Texas A&M University. As university housing does not provide linens, please bring your own twin bed sheets, pillow, pillowcase, blanket, and towels. NSN can provide these linens for you for a fee.

During the conference, Windham Scholars are required to volunteer for 2 hours. Following the conference, Windham Scholars will be asked to submit to newsletter@storynet.org a reflection essay of their experience to be published in the National Storytelling Network's monthly newsletters.



Kathryn Tucker Windham
Selma journalist and founding member
of the National Storytelling Network.

Image credit: The New York Times
(2010)

CLICK TO APPLY TO THE 2026 WINDHAM SCHOLARSHIP

IN MEMORIAM

NSN MOURNS THE LOSS OF STORYTELLER,
AUTHOR, AND REMARKABLE TELLER COACH:
DOUG LIPMAN

Delanna Reed
Immediate Past President
National Storytelling Network

Doug Lipman, a notable storyteller who touched countless lives over his 79 years, passed away on December 26, 2025. His passing has sparked an outpouring of love and grief from storytellers worldwide. Doug's impact on my life is profound.

I vividly remember attending a workshop with him in the early 2000s. Years later, he returned to ETSU to teach an extraordinary summer institute on his unique approach to coaching. Additionally, I used Doug's practical and effective text, *Improving Your Storytelling* in my graduate-level Foundations of Storytelling course for several years. His influence has undoubtedly shaped my journey as a teacher and storyteller. Before his remarkable career as a storyteller, Doug was a folksinger. His path to storytelling was serendipitous, mirroring the journey of many storytellers during the early days of the storytelling revival. As documented in Joseph Sobol's book, *The Storytellers' Journey: An American Revival*, Doug was teaching in a private school where the children who were bused in arrived early. One morning, when the assistant principal was absent and the teachers were unsure of how to keep the kids occupied until classes began, Doug had an idea.



Doug Lipman
December 23, 1946 to December 26, 2025

Since the assistant principal was known for his storytelling, Doug decided to take on the same role. He recounted a Jack tale he heard Ray Hicks tell on a recording the previous night. The children were captivated by his storytelling. Shortly after that, Doug made a bold decision to bill himself as a storyteller who sings songs, rather than a singer who tells stories. His career took off and he continued to inspire and entertain audiences for years to come. Doug Lipman's life and contributions to the storytelling community are truly unforgettable. His stories, spanning Hasidic traditions and other folk traditions, have touched many people. His respectful, teller-centered coaching techniques have transformed lives. Through his books, *Storytelling Tips*, newsletters, website, and recordings, he shared his expertise with the world. Doug was instrumental in shaping NAPPs, which is now known as NSN. He served on the board, actively participated in conferences and supported the online auction by generously donating his time as a coach. In 2017, Doug Lipman was awarded the NSN ORACLE Lifetime Achievement Award, a well-deserved recognition for a life well-lived and a career that will continue to have a lasting impact on our community for years to come.

IN MEMORIAM

We are publishing remembrances from Doug's friends, Jay O'Callahan and Joseph Sobol. A memorial page has been added to the NSN website: [In Memorial - National Storytelling Network](#).

You can leave your own remembrance of Doug there or at this link: [Memories of Doug Lipman - National Storytelling Network](#).

All remembrances will be sent to Rachel Hedman for inclusion in the Story Crossroads Story Artists Memorial project: [Story Artists Memorial – Story Crossroads](#).



Jay O'Callahan

1996 ORACLE Circle of Excellence Award
Recipient

Doug and I were friends for about fifty years. We worked on scores of stories. We ran workshops. We traveled to Venice together. He was a great help when I had a theatre run in Boston.

During one period of working together I would drive from Marshfield up to Doug's office in Medford arriving at 7am to avoid the traffic. Our mornings started walking along the railroad tracks to have breakfast at SoundBites. I felt like we were Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. Just going to breakfast was an adventure. Once our breakfast was ordered Doug would ask me for a New and Good. He wanted to know about something new in my life but also something positive. That got us off to a good start.

New and Good would lift our spirits. That was a lively and positive way to begin every time we met in person or on zoom. He had a wonderful sense of humor and brought that out in me and others. New and Good was opening an invisible door. A chance to look at what had been happening. I will miss that.

When I was working on new long stories, Doug's comments helped the story grow. "Do you want just what is working? Do you want to hear suggestions?"

...



Joseph Sobol

Professor & Director Emeritus
University of South Wales George Ewart Evans
Centre for Storytelling Research

In 1983 I attended my first National Storytelling Festival. I heard Jackie Torrence tell a story that I immediately went back home and told the next weekend, as one did in those innocent, pre-etiquette days. I heard Jay O'Callahan do his bravura one-man play "The Herring Shed;" had my first life-shaping experience of Ray Hicks telling Jack tales; witnessed Laura Simms bringing her lightning-flash timing to fairy tales; saw Connie and Barbara's adorable cousin routines.

But the telling that moved me most of all that weekend was Doug Lipman's version of "Two Souls" from Meyer Levin's collection of Hasidic tales. It was so emotionally transparent and spiritually imminent that the end left me bathed in tears of forgiveness and reunion. It was exactly the story I needed to hear. Tents were small in those days, and I was able to stand in the receiving line afterwards, to take Doug's hand and look into his eyes with my own overflowing. He gave me a look that I saw often as the years went by—a paradoxical gaze of total conviction mingled with wide-eyed incredulity at the miracle of what he had to share.

That paradox of belief and astonishment suffused his storytelling masterpiece, The Soul of Hope, a hugely ambitious extended work that wove ...



Jay O'Callahan

1996 ORACLE Circle of Excellence Award
Recipient

... I wanted both but needed the positive comments first to give me confidence that there was a story there. This always led to a discovery. "That is the perfect word." If he said that, that word stayed. He would talk about character, place and time. These are the essentials to make a story.

For all our years together, I had a brilliant friend who was interested in what made stories come alive. His sense of the structure of a story was better than anyone I ever met. The two of us were wrestling for fifty years to help each story come alive. And it all worked because we loved and trusted one another.

An incredible gift.



Joseph Sobol

Professor & Director Emeritus
University of South Wales George Ewart Evans
Centre for Storytelling Research

... the legendary biography of the founder of the Hasidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov, into a mythic theology of storytelling itself.

Doug was a great storyteller in my view, but one whose esoteric interests put him a little aslant to the popular storytelling frame. Which made him an ideal outsider insider for me—whenever I needed clear insight and a clear narrative of what had happened and was happening in the storytelling world, whether artistically, critically, or politically, Doug was my first and most trusted call.

He found his most consistent success as a storytelling coach, helping clients to articulate and actualize their own goals and self-direction. In that line, his influence on his own and the next generation of storytelling performers and practitioners who had the privilege of working with him was enormous. But his authority as a coach came from his sheer talent as a teller, one who was willing to sacrifice the spotlight in order to provide that light to others.

I've been feeling the imminence of his departure a lot these past few days, with a mixture of sadness and surrender to the transitions taking place in the web of the world. The other night I woke from a dream in which Doug was telling a story directly to me, in answer to my persistent dismay and confusion about the state of things—telling me a story that was exactly what I needed to hear, and telling it with that same characteristic look of paradoxical conviction and incredulity at the miracle of creation, sustaining that expression even on the verge of his own departure from this plane.

Be borne on wings of wonder, my friend. Thanks for the miracles.

MEMBER NOTES



Julienne B. Ryan, past chair of NSN's Storytelling In Organizations special interest group, has been honored with the *2025 Beacon of Hope Missions Storytelling Award of Excellence* in Zululand, South Africa.

jryanpartners.com

FEATURED EVENTS (*click to register*)



presents

THE FIREBIRD

AS TOLD BY MEGAN WELLS



**RISE UP FROM
THE ASHES!**

Sunday

February 8th

On Zoom!

8:00 pm ET/7:00 pm CT

6:00 pm MT/5:00 pm PT

Suggested Donation:

\$20



Storytelling In Organizations Presents a Virtual Webinar Series

Storytelling to Shape Culture Mindset in Organisations

When: Every 2nd Tuesday

January 13, 2026 February 10, 2026 March 10, 2026 April 14, 2026

Time: 8:00 pm -9:00 pm Eastern

Goal: At the end of the webinar series, attendees will be able to learn how to notice, find, and use stories that nurture the way people think and perform in their organizations.

Objectives

Session 1: Stories that define culture mindset

- Practice noticing cultural mindset indicators in existing stories

Session 2: Understanding stories, narratives, and beliefs

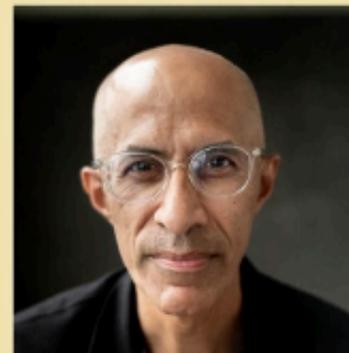
- Learn observation and listening techniques to uncover the deeper beliefs behind stories

Session 3: Leading change through narratives

- Practice eliciting powerful stories that support the desired culture mindset

Session 4: Stories to change culture mindset

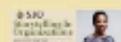
- Practice to deliver stories to become a better storyteller in an organisational context



Facilitator: Vinod Krishna

Founder of Storytelling at Work™
MBA in Human Resources Management
Certified Project Management
Professional (PMP®)
Certified NLP Master Practitioner

SIO Members: Free
Non-SIO Members: Free



FEATURED EVENTS (*click inside box to register*)



Storytelling In Organizations Presents: Stories Inside Words

Hosted by: Artem Mushin-Makedonskiy

When: Saturday, March 28, 2026

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. EDT

Where: Zoom

By the end of the webinar session participants will be able to:

- Understand that differences of meaning of the same word are not just possible but also valuable
- Use storytelling to help groups communicate more effectively when discussing common goals.



Facilitator: Madelyn Blair, Ph.D.

Author and Host of Unlocked Podcast on YouTube

Faculty at Columbia University

Division Chief at the World Bank

Website: www.madelynblair.com

Free to SIO Members and Non-Members



FEATURED EVENTS (*click inside box to register*)



Storytelling In Organizations Presents: The RIGHT Impact Story to Drive Change

When: Saturday, February 28, 2026

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. EST

Where: Zoom

By the end of the webinar session participants will be able to:

1. Identify six types of impact stories and explain when each type is useful for what strategic purpose.
2. Use a structured interview approach, when needed, to gather strong impact story elements.
3. Embrace the ethical considerations involved in story collection and sharing.

Free to SIO Members and Non-Members



**Facilitator:
Sally Perkins, Ph.D.**

Consultant in story-driven
organizational communication
Coach & Storyteller





NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR (*links in titles when available*)

FEBRUARY 2026

[Let Me Tell Ya! Book Club • *The Perfect Story* by Karen Eber](#)

February 1, 2026 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Eastern

February 8, 2026 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Eastern

VIRTUAL

[Better Said Than Done • 5 Weeks of Winter Workshops with Jessica Piscitelli Robinson](#)

February 2, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern • Personal Storytelling

February 9, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern • Braided, Fractured, and Re-imagined

February 16, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern • Braided Storytelling

February 23, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern • Fractured and Re-imagined Stories

March 2, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern • Across Mediums

VIRTUAL

[True Tales Live • Storytelling Workshop Series](#)

Share a story off the air and get feedback!

February 3, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

March 3, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

April 7, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

May 5, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

September 1, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

VIRTUAL

[Storytelling Arts of Indiana • Hear Our Stories: The Life and Afterlife of Incarceration on the Mainstage](#)

February 8, 2026 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Eastern

HYBRID

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center • 450 W Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana

National Storytelling Network Storytelling In Organizations Special Interest Group presents:

[Storytelling to Shape Culture Mindset in Organizations Webinar Series with Vinod Krishna](#)

February 10, 2026 • 7:00 – 8:00 pm Central

March 10, 2026 • 7:00 – 8:00 pm Central

April 14, 2026 • 7:00 – 8:00 pm Central

VIRTUAL

[Howell Opera House Live • The Storytellers](#)

February 12, 2026 • 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Eastern • Adam Mellema

March 19, 2026 • 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm Eastern • Ingrid Nixon

Howell Opera House • 123 W Grand River Ave • Howell, Michigan

[Voices in the Glen Story Swap](#)

February 21, 2026 • 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

VIRTUAL

National Storytelling Network Storytelling In Organizations Special Interest Group presents:

[The Right Impact Story to Drive Change with Sally Perkins, Ph.D.](#)

February 28, 2026 • 11:00 am – 12:15 pm Central

VIRTUAL



Storytelling Arts of Indiana • If These Walls Could Tell: Electric Works

March 29, 2026 • 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Eastern

HYBRID

Indiana Landmarks • 1201 Central Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana

Storytelling Arts of Indiana • The Heron's Journey featuring Adam Booth

March 14, 2026 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern

HYBRID

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center • 450 W Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana

True Tales Live • “Never Again” Storytelling Show

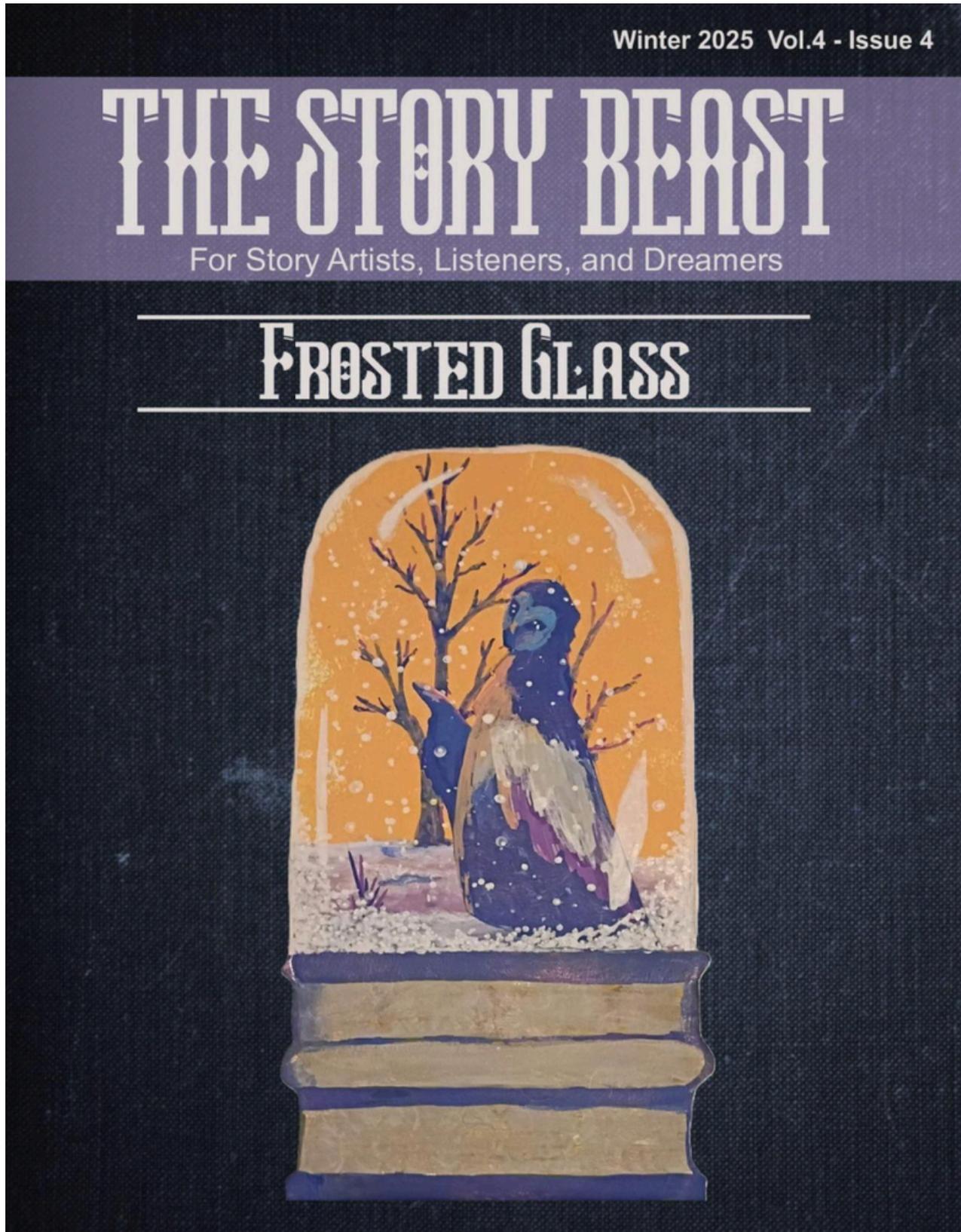
March 31, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:15 pm Eastern

VIRTUAL

THE STORY BEAST

Click the cover below to access the Winter 2025 Story Beast issue: *Frosted Glass*.

Visit storybeast.org for 2026 submission information.





NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Margaret Read MacDonald	Managing Editor
Rishi Nixon	Assistant Managing Editor
Ashton Cynthia Clarke	Events Editor
Rita Rigano	Copy Editor
Sara Armstrong	Copy Editor
Nick Smith	Editor
Cassie Selleck	Editor

HOW TO SUBMIT TO THE NEWSLETTER:

Send us your events, articles, opportunities, storytelling, or storyteller news, and more in an email to newsletter@storynet.org to go out to the national storytelling community!

1. Contributions due on the 25th of the month.
2. Membership in the National Storytelling Network *not* required.
3. Content subject to editing and inclusion in final issue not guaranteed.
4. If you are the author of your contribution, please also attach a headshot photo of yourself to go next to your byline.