



Smog City

Rebecca McNutt

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Smog City

Rebecca McNutt

Smog City Rebecca McNutt

"*Syndrome E* meets *Marianne Dreams*, but *Smog City* incorporates Cape Breton's industrial past with super 8 found footage which puts it in a class all its own." ~Google Blogs

Smog City is a Canadian noir novel written by teenage author Rebecca McNutt in 2011 and published in 2015. It tells the story of a misfit but nonetheless average girl who has a friendship with the personification of a hazardous waste site in Sydney, an industrial steeltown of Atlantic Canada, from the 1980's to 2013. The year is 1986, and there's a surreal number of events hidden in plain sight. Digital is in and traditional is out, the world is rapidly changing and Eastern Canada is one of many places caught up in it. Mandy Valem is eighteen, planning to go to college soon with dreams of being a photojournalist, but the sudden unexplained death of her older brother has left her emotionally scarred. She's also living on Cape Breton Island, a small but very industrial place in Atlantic Canada, during the environmental movement and the Sydney Tar Ponds case, and her best friend Wendy and her grieving parents aren't much help either... then one day Mandy meets an assumed imaginary friend (who is a super 8 film enthusiast), and as she gets older she finds herself falling deeper and deeper into something dangerous involving a dark secret between pollution and nature. She's too old to have an imaginary friend - at least, she thinks so - but her friend might be the most real friend she's ever had in the world.

The trouble is, he's got the promise of certain death looming over him, unless Mandy can do something to help. Traveling through shocking VHS found footage and nostalgic memories of the past, her confusing life gets out of control and she begins to question society in general - and whether or not the rapid and thoughtless conversion of everything to digital technology is dooming the world. *Smog City* takes Cape Breton's extensive steelmaking past past and 20th century nostalgia to a whole different level, one where pollution has emotion and two friends try their best to survive in a place where everything is changing.

Smog City Details

Date : Published January 2nd 2015 by Createspace (first published January 1st 2015)

ISBN :

Author : Rebecca McNutt

Format : Paperback 440 pages

Genre : Fantasy, Fiction, Novels, Contemporary

 [Download Smog City ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Smog City ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Smog City Rebecca McNutt

From Reader Review Smog City for online ebook

Luke Taylor says

Mandy's struggle to save a toxic site from remediation and her interesting relationship with the site's identity parallel the metaphor of adolescent innocence and its labored transition to adulthood, caught in the site's metaphysical witness of a hundred years of cultural change. Mandy's idealism of wanting life to be a certain way mixes with Alecto's near film-noir ambivalence and existential sarcasm. The new wave of a marshmallow-minded digital-born generation and their caustic opinion of industrialism and all of its life-sustaining economic properties as a threat to the well-being of the planet add to the juxtaposition of the character's taste in seventies music, old diners, real film, and the battleground of touristy Nova Scotia, hovering between these two intellectually warring factions. A masterpiece of originality and eclectic authenticity as drawn from the brave soil of a young writer's burgeoning youth, Smog City never apologizes for what it truly is, a powerful testament to the misunderstanding of change as blended with a massive exposition on the heartbeat of classic industrialism and the soullessness of the modern-era. Smog City never attempts to capitulate to the tropes of genre, giving this easy-to-read tale a sincerity of passion as vivid as Rebecca McNutt's visualisation of Sydney, Nova Scotia, itself.

G.R. Hewitt says

This is an intriguing book and I was transported very quickly to the tar ponds site – I love the smell of tar (assuming the STP smells the same as I know). The story-line is unique; the personification of a hazardous waste site befriending a human being. This is a fast paced book, snappy dialogue and believable characters. I lamented, along with Mandy at the demise of proper photography and the analogue world now all but buried under the ubiquitous and homogenising 'digital age'.

For me, a good book is one where life is an irritating interruption to my reading of it. This was such a book and I enjoyed reading it very much. The book itself - I read borrowed a copy from a friend - was wonderfully quirky – I always knew what page I was on thanks to the big page numbers and, if I read correctly, the excellent art work was done in MS Paint; no mean feat.

This book is well worth reading and I recommend it.

M.J. Evans says

This was an edgy, quirky and clever story! It amazed me that the author is just a teenager. The cover art is impressive as well. Way to go, Rebecca!

Cindy Boogie says

"What's on your corrupted mind, pretty little Sydney Tar Ponds?"

I got a free PDF copy of *Smog City* from the author, and after reading it I have all sorts of questions racing through my mind.

Smog City is depressing and horrific and definitely not a book for younger readers, but I do have to say, it's certainly creative; from an eccentric photojournalist to a toxic waste site personification with a collection of snuff reels in his house, this book sort of wipes away the facade of Cape Breton's green, cheery tourist attraction atmosphere.

Mandy is a deeply troubled person and her jock older brother's accident that took his life leaves her parents grief-stricken. They're hardly characters because they're at work constantly, in fact they're just figures who appear once or twice very briefly. Mandy finds herself home alone most days and nights, but at eighteen years old she's allowed to wander her Canadian small town home as she pleases. The place she spends the most time at is the Sydney Tar Ponds, a toxic chemical estuary near her own home. Her only friend is Wendy, the high school gossip and immature girl who spends most of her time airing out the dirty laundry of her friends and neighbors.

One day Mandy meets a kid who appears to be her own age named Alecto. Alecto smokes cigarettes and seems to hardly ever leave the Tar Ponds site. He comes across to Mandy as fragile, weak, thin and depressed, so, suspecting that somebody is abusing him, she takes pity on him and gets to know him some more after a few days. On one night, Mandy does something horrible and Alecto turns out to be more helpful than she ever expected. She also finds out that he's not a person, and this fact sort of makes her snap. She and Alecto become best friends, but when Mandy questions Alecto about his personal life, he refuses to tell.

As the novel goes on, it's towards the middle of it where it takes a turn from being whimsically eccentric towards being disturbing and depressing. Mandy starts getting crazier and crazier, in fact she (view spoiler) Alecto starts questioning his own life, (view spoiler).

Mandy might be just hallucinating Alecto because time and time again she questions whether or not he's imaginary. I felt sorry for Alecto but he freaked me out, especially since he seems to be telekinetic and he has an obsession with less-than-cheerful home movies and false nostalgia. I think my favorite character though was Mrs. Matthias, she was hilarious but menacing and the perfect portrayal of a nosy neighbor! Mearth just left me disturbed, she tortures poor Alecto - *literally* - and drives Mandy hopelessly insane through the whole book, and even before she's introduced as a character, McNutt has her lurking in the shadows from the beginning.

It was so sad! I can't believe how sad it was, it made me want to dig through my old laptop photos and have a slideshow and it made me realize just how quick time passes and just how cruel some things can be. At the same time, it had a happy ending and I loved the way it all worked out. *Smog City* might be self-published, but you wouldn't know it by reading it since it was so well-written and there wasn't a single spelling mistake.

Kelly Brigid says

"Even though the idiots outnumber most people these days, there are still enough intelligent people to fight against it."

I received a free PDF from the author in exchange for an honest review. Thanks Rebecca!

I have a sudden urge to buy a Polaroid camera after reading this book...

I liked *Smog City*. I liked it quite a bit. It is certainly a highly unusual, yet very intriguing novel. I wouldn't recommend it for the faint of heart, considering that some scenes are quite eerie and disturbing. It's the first

book regarding pollution I've read that takes the *opposite side of the argument*! Fascinating! It must've taken some guts to write a book like this. I applaud thee, Rebecca McNutt, I applaud thee. I had several doubts before reading this book. The primary reason being that I am perfectly ignorant of Canadian culture, but this thankfully turned out to be irrelevant. I had also heard that this book was incredibly disturbing, so being the squeamish teenage girl that I am, I waited several months before starting on this book...

When will I learn that hesitation and procrastination are senseless?! Actually, come to think of it...college isn't too far away. I'll learn then.

Smog City takes place in a meager, yet eminently industrial town in Nova Scotia, Canada, and follows the story of Mandy Valems - an antisocial eighteen-year-old girl who hopes to earn a career in photojournalism, and spends her free time capturing photos a toxic waste site called the Sydney Tar Ponds. After Mandy's older brother dies in a car accident, her family begins to tear itself apart. Several months after the accident, Mandy meets Alecto - a dreary teenager, who she feels a strange connection to, but no one else seems to acknowledge his existence. After saving Mandy from a lifetime in prison for the murder of her neighbor, Alecto tells her that he's a personification of the Sydney Tar Ponds.

At first, I had a little trouble getting into *Smog City*, because I couldn't necessarily connect with Mandy Valems. I pitied her when Jud died, and her parents no longer cared about her, but I didn't feel any connection to her. She just seemed too *generic*, I suppose. This usually wouldn't be much of an issue, but considering that there's really only three recurring characters, I like to be able to relate with at least one of them. Now, that being said, I don't think Mandy was a bad protagonist. As her mental state gradually deteriorates throughout the novel, she quits her job, her family practically renounces her, and she becomes a hermit. Pretty realistic, considering that her best friend is *literally* pollution. I think Mandy is supposed to be a sort of *personification* for modern-day society, and perhaps that's why she doesn't have a very distinct personality. Still a fairly interesting character though.

Alecto gave me the heebie-jeebies. I felt so unbelievably bad for him. He's depressed, has a pretty serious case of Stockholm Syndrome, and (view spoiler). This guy is really screwed up in the head, but I can't help loving him. The saddest part is, as much as he doesn't want to live, he can't help staying alive! *sigh* Poor, poor, Alecto.

What scared me most about this book wasn't Mearth, though she was a class-A creep, but that the digital age **is** taking over the world and no one seems to remember, nor care about the past. No one knows who the Rolling Stones are anymore, or what a cassette tape is! Some day, I'm going to be singing along to some good ol' Beatles and not a single soul will know the song that's coming out of my mouth.

Conclusion. Rebecca McNutt's *Smog City* is a well-written, hauntingly entertaining novel, that presented a very interesting concept, and brought up several issues with modern-day culture that should be discussed more. Also, I really enjoyed the pictures Rebecca drew in the back of the book! I wish I was a decent artist...

"Nature plays a dangerous game."

Rick Slane says

A remarkable achievement for anyone let alone a 12 year old girl. I bought a copy so I will offer some honest criticism. Instead of just dropping the names of classic rock songs, do more with them like explaining how they affect the scene. For example Joe Hill in The Fireman references the Dire Straits song "Romeo & Juliet" several times with the Fireman asking "you and me babe, how about it?" More effective is his use of the movie "Mary Poppins" and three songs from the movie. A friend of mine spent a summer in the 1970's in Sidney, Nova Scotia. I will lend him the book and see if I can get his thoughts. He already told me about his difficulties in growing a garden and how interested his neighbors were in his efforts.

Scott Hayden says

Smog City is one book that will stick in your mind long after you read it. The two main characters, Mandy and Alecto (who happens to be a manifestation of pollution) become friends in the bleak town of Sydney, Nova Scotia. Alecto loves vintage cameras, particularly the Super 8. Trouble is, the tar ponds in Sydney will be transformed into a green space and when that happens Mandy will lose her only friend in the world. Can they survive Mearth? You'll have to read the book to find out.

Kat Grace says

This book was incredibly beautiful. I've never read a book this fast in my entire life! I loved the characters, the story, and every little detail. I never had to stop and question what was happening because it was always made clear. I bought all three of the Smog City books and I can't wait to read the sequel! I think I'll always keep this book close to my heart.

Myrcydys says

I was given this story in pdf form, in exchange for an honest review. I have to say I enjoyed the book, it made me stop and think about the way things were and the way things are. I love photography and reading the book made me miss the process of yesterday and yet feel grateful for the modern advances. I was torn in regards to Alecto, being soft hearted I wanted to see him succeed. Knowing he is pollution caused me second thoughts. Overall the story was great, I never knew what to expect. Great plots twists. :)

Thank you Rebecca, great story!

Clio Heard says

Into the world of *Smog City*!

Smog City is the story of a girl called Mandy who has a long friendship with the living embodiment of the

Sydney Tar Ponds.

The idea of anthropomorphic personifications of polluted areas is new to me, so I was interested to see how it played out in the story. It creates an interesting moral dilemma, that if the Sydney Tar Ponds are cleaned up a sentient being will die.

The book talks a lot about nostalgia, and the feeling of loss that comes with moving into a new age. Mandy and Aleto both obsess over old things and have romanticized views of the past. It was nice to see that played out over the passing of many years. Nostalgia is a very interesting and complicated subject. The world is always changing and people have always idealized the past. Just as now there are now people who wish they could live in the sixties or the European Renaissance or the Medieval period, there will be some people in the future who feel deep nostalgia for *this* decade, and picture it when they long for a better time. For humans, time is an endless chain of loss and novelty. Is it wrong to romanticize the past? Is taking out the best pieces of the past just a basis for improving the future? I don't know.

The book's discussion of pollution felt a bit incomplete. Mandy claims that pollution is actually a good thing, not harmful, but doesn't provide any evidence to support that idea. Sure, her best friend *is* pollution, and it's perfectly fine to want to protect him, but she suggests that pollution itself is good, for no reason beyond that she finds it beautiful. This viewpoint wouldn't bother me, but it comes across as one-sided in the story. Nobody who opposes Mandy's perspective is presented as reasonable. The personification of Mother Earth is nothing but pure evil. Maybe if there had been personifications of, say, national parks, wildlife reserves, or other forms of wilderness to balance out the Pollution (and who were just as much decent people as the Pollution), it would've helped balance out the story.

This is a difficult review for me to write, as I have conflicted feelings about this book. I think that is because it is the work of an author who is still developing her talent. It is an interesting story, and I hope that Rebecca McNutt continues writing in the future.

Ray says

The writing style reminds me of Faulkner. Clear, precise and to the point. This is a story of a girl whom feels miscast in a place that has become mobilized by technology. Surrounded by new technology she wonders what was wrong with the old. If I is not broken don't fix it. I tend to agree with her. I just recently got a cell phone just to use in case of an emergency last year, I enjoy older music to new, older shows were better and more thought provoking, old film to digital may have taken longer but what a thrill seeing it develop slowly like a flower blooms... I could go on but she better explains in the book. After a family tragedy and feeling alone she befriends a personification of a pollution site of course this wins her no favor and pushes her more to the outside than in which is fine with her. Sadness, loss, friendship trying to find a place to belong and many themes this book takes form. She lends her hand and walks you in her shoes and hometown seamlessly. I can only say positive things about this book. For something different and a page turner give this book a read.

Thomas Strömquist says

I was very kindly given a review e-copy of this book by the author.

Starting out, I had some vague and poorly thought out idea that I was to/should review this book without

alluding to the authors age. This soon proved impossible, because it is quite an accomplishment to put something like this to paper, starting out at an age where most of us struggle with complete and coherent sentences. The surreal, oddly occasionally violent story doesn't indicate a teenage author either, but is quite challenging at times. The embodiment/manifestation into human form ("representation") of hazardous waste sites/polluted areas and the main characters reaction to them I never really got used to or got right in my head. I jumped at the first statement of "I like pollution!" (uttered even before she's aware of the "representations" and befriending the chain-smoking and Windex-drinking Alecto, the Sydney Tar Ponds made flesh(?)). The embodiment of "Mearth" is also hard to comprehend, vicious and ugly, brought rather an old testament god, gotten up on the wrong side and vengeful, than a mellow earth mother to mind. Throw in a resentment for the environmental movement and in particular "hippies" into the mix and the mind is boggled even more.

Lots of references to 80's music, analog technology (cameras and celluloid film especially) and a huge dislike of modern technology, digital media and constant on-line presence actually makes even the young protagonist nostalgic for a time she really hasn't experienced(!?) But, this is of course not the only contradictory theme in the book as stated above.

Certainly, this is a self-published first, by a (very) young writer and it shows in places, surprisingly little in typos/mistakes, but the dialog (and there's a lot!) is a little bit awkward in places (but quite good in others). The ending chapters could have used some editing, things started to go in circles there for a while. The epilogue is really good and added a lot to the story and experience. I'm very curious to see what later offerings will bring.

Renée Paule says

Smog City is an amazing novel in many ways; that it was written by a twelve year old - tackling a hostile environment - makes it all the more so. At that age I would have struggled to construct a sentence, let alone a book!

Aly says

This book was a fun read for me. The main characters, Mandy and Alecto, become friends. I liked this book and I was surprised at how much I enjoyed it. The story was not what I expected to read from the a cover of this book but I'm glad I read it! * I received this book from LibraryThing giveaway and this is my honest review*

Céline Frenière says

A Walk to the Dark Side

Mandy Valems is an impressionable, lonely teenager who is grieving the loss of her brother and unable to form a long-term friendship with her peers and neighbours. In an effort to overcome her sense of isolation, she strikes up an unlikely relationship with Alecto, an odd youth who soon exerts a mysterious, destructive influence over her.

The French author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry captured the magic and attraction of creating an imaginary friend in his classic *The Little Prince*. In that instance, a pilot crashed his plane in the Sahara desert and survived his isolation by inventing an imaginary friend. Whereas the little prince represented a benign influence, Alecto turns out to be a rather malevolent, albeit seductive, attraction. Although he helps relieve Mandy's loneliness, he also brings more trouble than he solves. He represents the walk to the dark side.

Despite numerous warnings by Alecto to stay away from him or risk terrible danger, Mandy remains loyal to him. She resists changes at all costs, including an alarming attachment to a toxic pond in the middle of her Canadian city, just because it has always been there for her. It's a pretty weird idea, but it becomes an excuse for refusing to grow up. Will she eventually overcome this obsession with the past and move on or will she forever remain immature? That is the question this book will hopefully resolve.

Mandy hangs on to Alecto in the mistaken belief that she can control him. But what Alecto represents is strong, and seductive, and more destructive than anything she can possibly handle. It is the dark side of humanity, the desire for evil, murder and self-protection.

We are so often attracted to danger. Why? Whatever Alecto represents to Mandy, it is a powerful attraction. It speaks of cruelty, murder, pollution that kills innocent people and ruins lives. And yet, Mandy cannot get away from Alecto. He has become a part of herself.

I enjoyed reading *Smog City* for the sheer curiosity of getting into the mind of a 13-year-old. And what a teenager that is! Rebecca McNutt is imaginative, creative, brim-full of ideas and a wonderful artist, too. For those qualities alone, I am giving *Smog City* five stars. I will look forward to reading other books by Miss McNutt. I am curious to see how her formidable writing talent grows.

This book was given to me in return for an honest review.