

TRUE **Review**

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Blue Days, Black Nights

Some people have astonishing weaknesses: they are alcoholics. They like to smoke. They drink too much. They enjoy porno.

Me, I am a social drinker only. I detest smoke, even second-hand. When it comes to porno, I'd rather have the real thing. These types of vices are stupid.

And gambling is for idiots.

Politics, too.

No, my weakness in life is that I have a tendency to be co-dependent.

I've been struggling for some time with this co-dependency thing. Perhaps a long time ago, when I was a little wee tyke, my sisters, who were supposed to be babysitting me, left me hang, so there I was, sitting in some sandbox at the park, abandoned. Didn't want to feel that alone again. Ever.

Back in April 2004, I wrote about Ashley Boyce, a high school friend killed by her deranged boyfriend, Ben Bottenfield. Ashley got herself tied up with an utterly possessive man. Maybe she was co-dependent. Ashley Boyce died at her work on the parking lot. Ben killed himself later that day.

I am in the midst of recovering from a relationship with a woman I will simply call "Roxanne" (not her real name). With Roxanne, I used extremely bad judgment and got punished for it. It's been so long since I had any kind of real relationship with someone (my wife left me some time ago, but our troubles extend way, way back), that I saw this coming and just took it all in. Unthinking. Blind. Stupid.

And Roxanne made the same mistakes

herself. Perhaps I was somebody she waited for and found.

If you were waiting for something for 20-some years, maybe you'd do the same.

The point is, Roxanne is a very exciting person, a charm, passionate, someone I could easily fall in love with. She was everything to me my ex-wife wasn't: spontaneous, playful, engaging, affectionate, happy, and madly in love with me.

Good things can come out of this.

Except one thing: obsessive relationships.

Roxanne herself is in a relationship where the man is possessive and whom I view as quite dangerous. He simply won't let her go, despite her telling him it is over, we are done. It's not love, it's ownership - and psychos really can't tell the difference.

So, besides worrying about my career and my health, I cared very deeply about Roxanne. I still do. I actually feel very sorry for her and her "insignificant" other.

Women expect the man to somehow "rescue" them from bad relationships. They won't admit it, but they do. Actually, the only way they rescue themselves is on their own. Most real men don't want to fight. I don't want to fight. I detest fighting. Fighting is the refuge of the incompetent.

Just like in the ELO song, Jeff Lynn singing about "Blue Days, Black Nights" from "Telephone Line," here I was, experiencing a connection with someone who literally put my life in jeopardy. I never knew what was going to happen to us and could

never, ever predict a good future.

I was loving every minute of Roxanne. I was hating every second of the incredibly stupid situation I put myself into. Hating like I've never hated before.

Days were filled with missing her. When I saw her at night, and she would eventually have to leave (don't want to upset the other guy), they were black with despair knowing we couldn't be together in a normal relationship. You see, she could only call me. She could see me only on HER terms in HER time. I had to wait. "Be patient," she'd say.

Blue days, black nights, I'd think.

In the end, when I started feeling sorry for myself, the relationship came to an end. Ending something you wait for years to develop is like committing emotional abortion, except it is worse.

I didn't want it to be this way. I didn't know what else to do. I'm not the Pope, you know. I am human. With limited strength. With limited control of most situations. With limited patience.

Don't do this to yourself, kids. Don't do this.

— Andrew Andrews
Publisher

This Ain't The Internet

Book Reviews
By Andrew Andrews

NEW DREAMS FOR OLD, by Mike Resnick. Pyr/Prometheus, 2006, 419 pp., \$15.00. ISBN 1-59-102441-2

Mike Resnick is the John Varley of the 2000s – the genre's best short story SF writer.

This collection, NEW DREAMS FOR OLD, proves it.

I enjoyed these stories:

"Robots Don't Cry." Sammy is a devoted nanny robot to Miss Emily, a very young girl. At least that's what he was, 500 years ago. Salvagers recover Sammy with memories intact on a human outpost. His devotion to Miss Emily stretches back through time. Is he more than a robot? The salvagers have to determine what lies in store for him.

"The Elephants On Neptune." Human space travelers land on the gas giant of a planet and discover a race of floating elephants. These elephants remem-

ber how humans treated them – badly – on earth. They have a lot of serious questions for the earth travelers. And they want to understand human philosophy – and why we lag so far behind elephants.

"Down Memory Lane." Paul, who has been married to his beloved wife Gwendolyn for 60 years, watches as some form of dementia – Alzheimer's? Transient Ischemic Attacks? – begin to turn back the clock on what was once a productive, intelligent woman. Paul tries desperately to stop the inevitable deterioration of Gwendolyn's mind, even going as far as attempting a risky procedure overseas on HIMSELF to find a cure. Love knows no boundaries, even the risks some will go to save it.

"The Chinese Sandman." The Andrews Sisters' song, "Japanese Sandman" is the inspiration for this story. In the Andrews Sisters' song, an old man collects things from an alley, trading new days for

old. The Chinese Sandman trades NEW DREAMS for old. This is one of the many private-I John Justin Mallory stories Resnick wrote.

"Old MacDonald Had A Farm." To feed a starving planet, one genius invents an animal called the Butterball – bioengineered for its meat. And lots of it. But is the Butterball becoming sentient?

"Hothouse Flowers." What happens when medical technology can keep people alive up to 200 years or more? What of those who have to care for them?

"Unsafe At Any Speed." If Superman could exist, just think what real havoc his true powers would create.

With an introduction by Nancy Kress, NEW DREAMS is truly inspirational for Resnick's fans.

SLIPSTREAMS, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg and John Helfers. DAW, 2006, 307 pp.,

TRUE
REVIEW

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\$7.99. ISBN 0-7564-0357-X

So if the short fiction you read isn't SF, Fantasy, Horror, Crime, Detective, Mystery, or Romance (I thought True Review covered them all), then it could be a combination of all seven, with a new label nowadays, "Slipstream."

Slipstream, you see, combines elements and so many tropes of everything from SF to mainstream that you can't put a market category on it.

But readers love the stuff.

OK, here's what I enjoyed from this all-original collection from 20 authors:

"From Gehenna" by Isaac Szpindel. A devout Jewish mom needs to oust a dybbuk from Nahum, the rabbi's son. But she needs to serve as a host to successfully rid her home of it.

What is she to do?

And what is to stop HER from doing evil as a result?

"Wingmen" by Jean Rabe. This tale makes you wonder: what made those World War I biplane pilots so feared? Were they in cahoots with some kind of demons? One Allied fighter pilot discovers some dark truths.

"Nite 2 Remember" by Pati Nagle. In this tale, a time travel company offering tours of the past has one lovely woman looking for Mr. Right, whom she happens to find aboard the fated Titanic. Is he a citizen of the past or an inhabitant of the future?

CONVERSATIONS WITH RAY BRADBURY, ed. by Steven L. Aggelis. University Press of Mississippi, 2004, 244 pp., \$20.00. ISBN 1-57806-641-7

Funny how recent news can make "old news" seem even more relevant.

This group of interviews with American fantasist Ray Bradbury has an awful lot of comments about the many, many scripts and proposals and updates and re-

scripting done on the Mel Gibson-coordinated "Fahrenheit 451" movie, supposedly adapted from Bradbury's landmark novel. We were hoping this movie would have the Mechanical Dog, of course.

But in this, Bradbury was excited about Gibson doing the movie. We'll see, in light of the recent events surrounding Mel Gibson - meaning the movie is likely going to be made by somebody else.

I think that's wrong. For all the commitment made, instead of doing that "Apocalypto" movie (the trailer tells you nothing about what it is about), Mel would have done a great service to everyone by doing the highly regarded American classic, "Fahrenheit 451."

(And, dammit, Mike Moore should have apologized to Bradbury just a little for taking part of this novel's name for his own movie . . .)

Interesting bits and pieces from the CONVERSATIONS book. On page 98, in a 1975 interview conducted by Shel Dorf for "Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction," Bradbury answers a question about whether SF would be given Pulitzer Prizes someday. Bradbury's remarkable answer: "By the year 2000, science fiction will dominate the mainstream literature of our time, because it IS the literature of our time, more important and more exciting and more creative than all the works of (Bernard) Malamud, (Philip) Roth, and (Norman) Mailer put together! We are paying attention to the totality of Mankind, while they are playing around in Brooklyn Heights and Levittown and boring us into the grave."

Interviews in this book are conducted about Bradbury's life and works, about his thoughts on some of the future-city themed parks, about why Bradbury really ISN'T and NEVER HAS BEEN an SF writer, all the way up to and including interviews as recent as the 21st century. Well, recently, anyway.

BLACK JUICE, by Margo Lanagan. Eos/HarperCollins, 2004, 2006, 262 pp., \$5.99. ISBN 0-06-074392-1

Somehow, BLACK JUICE reminded me of the way William Gibson wrote NEUROMANCER, inventing cyberspace, etc.

The cover and title have appeal, but you have to get used to Lanagan's quirky writing. Trying to read Lanagan is equivalent to listening to an Asperger person speak: they often start in the middle of a subject they have their own internal conversation about, and you are lost from the git-go.

But there was definitely a gifted author at work hard on several stories in this collection.

RECOMMENDED

DON'T FORGET THE DETAILS, by Linda Bairstow. Verity Publishing, 2006, 154 pp., Price? ISBN 0-9776982-0-3

DETAILS is actually a much better collection of free-verse ESSAYS than actual poems. I found Bairstow's ponderings about certain people she knows (no real names provided, but I am assuming they are real) - with their cruel intentions - a lot more involving than some of the light material. And her philosophies about a lot

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BEST ANTHOS

Reviews By
Andrew
Andrews

CHILDREN OF MAGIC, ed. by Martin H. Greenberg and Kerrie Hughes. DAW, 2006, 308 pp., \$7.99. ISBN 0-7564-0361-8

CHILDREN OF MAGIC is a 17-author original collection of those special children.

Those who loved the gifted kids arising from stories by everyone from Theodore Sturgeon to C.M. Kornbluth would certainly enjoy these:

"Mr. Death Goes To Washington" by Alan Dean Foster. The devil arrives in Washington to claim some desperately lost souls. That is, until he is beaten back by the lingo used by politicians, which can send even the devil himself loathing into the pits.

"Touching Faith" by Alexander B. Potter. Evan is gifted with the ability to make people "just feel better." They try to "diagnose" his gift, but it doesn't stop his powers to heal.

GIANT LIZARDS FROM ANOTHER STAR, by Ken MacLeod. The NESFA Press, 2006, 349 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 1-886778-62-0

I enjoyed several essays in **GIANT LIZARDS FROM ANOTHER STAR**, a single-author collection of fiction and such.

One essay dispelled the myths of

reading SF: that by reading SF there will be more scientists. That SF helps teach science. That SF readers go on to become scientists (wrong – they end up with careers in information technology, or computer nerd networking).

What MacLeod was insisting was that SF helps us to dream better and think of potential futures. Even though most "futures" in SF novels are rooted too deeply in the present, and either providing staunch satire and warning (as in George Orwell's "1984") or dark "if-this-goes-on" scenarios (even Robert Heinlein was good at that), SF has created legions of dreamers. If anything, SF as an exercise in imagination can be good.

Lots of book reviews here, commentary from panels at SF conventions, anecdotes, rantings, ravings, etc. of a pretty good SF writer:

ODDS ARE GOOD, by Bruce Coville. Magic Carpet/Harcourt, 2006, 333

GUEST REVIEW
BY JIM LEE

TARZAN ALIVE: A DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY OF LORD GREY-STOKE, by Philip Jose Farmer. Bison Books/University of Nebraska Press, 312 pp., \$19.95. ISBN 0-8032-6921-8

The little-known and offbeat literary subgenre of "fictional biography" reached its pinnacle with this 1972 book, reprinted with a slew of secondary goodies by a noted university press.

Claiming his subject is a real (though extraordinary semi-immortal) person, Farmer sifts through Tarzan's career as chronicled by Edgar Rice Burroughs. He goes story by story – separating "fact" from ERB's "impossible inventions" and intentional "errors," which Farmer claims were designed to protect the actual man's identity. It's a delightfully weird exercise in literary scholarship and imaginative flair.

This 2006 edition also includes an alleged "interview" with Tarzan, excerpts from his "memoirs," a thumbnail history of the "fictional bio" field (begun by Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts), a complete Tarzan bibliography, and lots more.

Order from University of Nebraska Press, 1111 Lincoln Mall, Lincoln, NE 68588-0630.

pp., \$6.95. ISBN 0-15-205716-1

This is simply an omnibus of two separate collections, **ODDLY ENOUGH** and **ODDER THAN EVER**.

Good stuff here. Enjoyed these stories: "The Box," "Homeward Bound," and "The Passing of the Pack."

TEDDY BEAR CANNIBAL MASSACRE, ed. by Tim Lieder. Dybbuk Press, 2005, 139 pp., \$13.00. ISBN 0-9766546-0-1

TEDDY BEAR CANNIBAL MASSACRE is one of the most offbeat, wooly collection of vignettes ever. It's a collection of "11 Stories of Fear, Obsession and Killer Clowns." Best story here is "Berries Under Snow" by William Brock, which features a scriptwriter who falls in love with an actress. Love is everlasting. Perhaps too everlasting. Order from Dybbuk Press, 516 W. 188th St., Ste. 25, New York, NY 10040.

of things come through in her long poems. Check this out.

Contact Verity Publishing, P.O. Box 1975, Tijeras, NM 87059.

THE FOUR REDHEADS OF THE APOCALYPSE, by Linda L. Donahue, Rhonda Eudaly, Julia S. Mandala, and Dusty Rainbolt. Yard Dog Press, 2006, 58 pp., \$6.00. ISBN 978-1-893687-70-8

This is a strange book written by these four ladies that is just OUT THERE, for want of a better word. Protagonists get to converse with Satan and determine their mortal fate, I suppose, with all the things they have to put up with (husbands, lives, etc.).

Order from Yard Dog Press, 710 W. Redbud Lane, Alma, AR 72921-7247

SLEEPING POLICEMEN, by Dale Bailey and Jack Slay Jr. Golden Gryphon Press, 2006, 200 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 1-930846-41-X

THE TOURMALINE, by Paul Park. TOR, 2006, 350 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 0-765-31441-X

A sequel to the popular A PRINCESS OF ROUMANIA (nominated for a Side-wise Award for alternate history) again features Miranda Popescu, knowing she's not just an ordinary girl but a princess adopted and raised by an American couple in Massachusetts.

POINT CLEAR, by Jennifer Paddock. Touchstone/Simon and Schuster, 2006, 223 pp., \$13.00. ISBN 0-7432-8782-7

Caroline Berry takes a break from her failed attempts at a writing career in New York to stay at a hotel on Mobile Bay at

Point Clear, Alabama. A hurricane warning means she has to evacuate, but she doesn't. She braves the storm and, afterward, is drawn to a survivor, a champion swimmer. Caroline becomes friends with him and his family, and learns a lot about herself along the way.

VOICES, by Ursula K. LeGuin. Harcourt, Inc., 2006, 341 pp., \$17.00. ISBN 0-15-205678-5

VOICES is the companion to GIFTS.

FLASHLIGHT ON, NIGHT FRIGHT OFF, by Sandra C. Addis. RoseDog Books, 2005, 29 pp., \$18.00. ISBN 0-8059-9782-2

FLASHLIGHT ON is a very short, short story about a girl who looks out of her bedroom at night and sees scary things. But even I can remember clouds in the sky that LOOK menacing and they are simply clouds. So her parents shine a flashlight on the Meanies outside the window. The Meanies then become quite ordinary things (bushes and trees) that aren't scary at all.

Order from Rosedog Books, 710 Smithfield St., 3rd Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222.

BURN, by Black Artemis. New American Library, 2006, 327 pp., \$13.95. ISBN 0-451-21857-4

INFOQUAKE, by David Louis Edelman. Pyr/Prometheus, 2006, 426 pp., \$15.00. ISBN 1-59102-442-0

INTERNET MUSINGS:

There's far more enjoyment to sitting back in your comfortable leather reading chair than sitting in front of a keyboard and screen.

FLORA SEGUNDA, by Ysabeau S. Wilce. Harcourt Children's Books, 2007, 428 pp., \$17.00. ISBN 978-0-15-205433-5

DYING FLAMES, by Robert Barnard. Scribner, 2006, 245 pp., \$24.00. ISBN 978-0-7432-7219-3

THE LEOPARD'S DAUGHTER, by Lee Killough. Yard Dog Press, 2006, 233 pp., \$16.00. ISBN 1-893687-77-5

I had promised the August issue of True Review: More from the Specialty Press!

Yes, we are still looking for books from small press publishers, including Wheatland, Wildside, Subterranean, Night Shade Books, and others. I am going to spread this coverage out over this issue and the next. Don't delay!

BOOKS TO REVIEW NEXT ISSUE:

LOVE HURTS, *And Other Short Stories*, by Barry Hoffman. Edge Books/Gauntlet, 2006, 84 pp., \$9.95. ISBN 1-8873688-9-2

Order from Gauntlet Publications, 5307 Arroyo St., Colorado Springs, CO 80922.

INVISIBLE PLEASURES, by Mary Frances Zambreno. American Fantasy, 2005, 241 pp., \$25.00. ISBN 0-9610352-4-2

Order from American Fantasy, 919 Tappan St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

BLACK POCKETS *And Other Dark Thoughts*, by George Zebrowski. Golden Gryphon Press, 2006, 276 pp., \$24.95. ISBN 1-930846-40-1

Order from Golden Gryphon Press, 3002 Perkins Rd., Urbana, IL 61802.

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