

She Dreams in Colors. She Dreams in Hope

F. John Sharp

Pasha removes bread and dried fruit from a canvas lunch bag and lays them on a napkin, arranging the pieces until the composition pleases her. She usually places the bread on the left and the fruit on the right, but she reverses it whenever she is about to work on Goran, like today.

“Look at Pasha,” says Goran, who dumps his food onto the square metal table. “See how content she is that again she has no meat for her lunch.”

Raisa frowns. “Goran, you should spend more time worrying about meeting your quota and putting meat on your own table. Leave Pasha alone for a change.”

“I think Goran is jealous of Pasha always making quota,” says Niki. “How long since Goran made quota? A month?”

“I made it a week ago Thursday.”

“So twice in a month then?” Raisa says. A threadbare blue babushka exaggerates the movement of her head as she nods to make her point. The dim light makes her graying hair look rusty.

Goran grumbles and bites off a chunk of day-old bread, which crunches and resists his efforts. Pasha continues to eat as though the conversation hasn't been about her, her mouth turned slightly upward, giving her the appearance either of being satisfied with her circumstances or of waiting patiently for an opening.

They sit, together as always, in the block-walled lunchroom with small windows, high up, with a view of only the hazy sky. Bare bulbs cast harsh shadows on the fifty or so workers who take the middle lunch period. It is their only break from a twelve-hour shift making metal parts that can be used for cars or trucks or tractors or tanks. They are never told which.

“Besides,” Raisa says, “I think that Pasha doesn't much care for meat, do you, Pasha?”

Pasha finishes chewing and swallowing a raisin. “Meat or no meat, it's no matter to me. My food is good enough.” She takes another raisin and chews deliberately.

"She is young yet," says Goran. "She will tire of her dried fruit and bread. 'Meat or no meat,' she says, as if such things are trifling. The days I have meat are the way I mark my calendar, with every other minute of my life so completely the same as the next. I have never had meat more than once in a week, even during Reform."

Niki says, "You just resent the Reformers because they did not lower your quota."

"It is hard to make quota with only eight fingers, my friend. They promised they would make allowances for cripples, but my quota got only bigger."

"That was only temporary—"

"They promised us a better life, but it got only worse. I'm glad the Old Ones returned us to the old ways. Nothing is better, but at least we don't expect it to be. Better to have no expectations than to be always disappointed."

"They needed more time, that is all," Niki says. "You cannot undo decades of *ugnyetyonnost* in two years. They just needed more time. Right, Pasha?"

Pasha tilts her head as she peels the crust from her bread. "The Reformers will free us one day."

"Oh, pffft," Goran says, waving her off with a dirty hand—his hands never come clean. "You, of all people, should know differently. Your father rots in a prison as the Old Ones' way of thanking him for his part in the Reform. Do you think he will once again lead us?"

"I have hope."

"Hope. HA!" Goran leans toward her, his rich brown eyes sparking to life in a weary face. "Let me tell you about hope. One does not dare to hope here, in this life, in this world. Hope is dangled before us, coaxing us to take one more step, then another, then another, until we have followed the newest liars from one desperate circumstance to another. Hope has been killed a thousand times over." Goran spits out an apple seed. "The only thing even resembling hope is my desire to simply survive to see another day. And that may not be hope so much as worry that even this life is better than death, if the afterlife, too, was created by liars." He glares at Pasha, but her placid countenance cannot be bullied from her face.

"There's Goran for you," Niki chuckles through a thick, dark beard, "ever the shiny coin."

Goran turns. "What could you possibly have to hope for, Niki? Was it not your wife who ran off to join the Reformers? When will she be coming back? Do you still hold hope that she will show

up at your doorstep, these five long years later, and be your wife again—?”

Niki slams his hand on the table. “You will *not* talk about her that way. She is still my wife. She hides for her life.”

“She is still your wife while in the bed of another? Hiding together for their lives?”

Niki jumps to his feet, his chair tumbling behind him. “You will take that back, Goran, man of no hope,” he says, leaning across the table. “Hopeless man, you will take that back.”

The lunchroom becomes silent; faces turn to watch.

Goran doesn’t flinch, takes another bite of apple. “I will do no such thing. I am right, as always.”

“Goran, hush,” Raisa says. “Niki, sit. Goran, you don’t know anything about Niki’s wife.”

Goran looks around as Niki regains his chair. One by one the workers return to eating. “Maybe, but I have heard things.”

“You have heard no such thing, Goran Milskevich,” Raisa says. “You never talk to anyone other than us and your wife.”

Goran sighs and finishes his apple. The muffled hum of motors in the next room and the muted talking at the other tables fills the silence.

Pasha clears her throat. “Goran, do you dream?”

Goran stares at his lunch.

“I dream,” Raisa says.

Pasha holds her gaze on Goran. “Do you, Raisa?” she asks.

“Yes. A few nights ago I had a dream about my husband being told to work in the mines again after he had finally been moved to the office. He came home covered in sweat and grime, and as he walked up the street he was camouflaged by the background of dirty sky and dingy buildings. He bumped right into me before I saw him, and he looked sad and worn and I thought he would die that very moment.” She drops her sandwich onto the table and shakes her head slowly. “They’re not making their quotas.”

Goran and Niki exchange glances. Pasha looks unconcerned and gives Raisa a reassuring smile. “Goran dreams too, don’t you, Goran?” she asks.

“No,” he says quickly, his eyes darting to Pasha then away. “I have not dreamed since . . . I cannot remember.”

“You cannot remember last night then?” asks Pasha.

“I did not dream last night.”

“But you tried, didn’t you?”

"How do you know this?"

"Your dreaming-self wanted to let me in, but you fought me."

"How do you know this, Pasha? Tell me."

"Your fighting makes me tired."

"Tell me!" he shouts.

Pasha smiles. "Because I am sending you my dreams, the dreams of my father, the dreams that will make you alive again."

Goran's eyes grow wide and he pushes away from the table, stuffing everything back into his bag. "Pasha," he says quietly, "that is dangerous talk. I do not want to be involved in your father's Reformer affairs. I need my sleep if I want ever again to make quota. Leave me alone." His metal chair screeches as he slides it back, and in a few long strides he is gone.

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The next day they eat quietly. The sound of the machinery hums and bangs dully from beyond the walls. Pasha speaks. "Did you dream last night, Goran?"

"Again with the questions, Pasha. If you weren't so odd I'd think you were a spy for the government."

"Did you?"

Goran shifts his gaze to Niki, then Raisa, then back to Pasha. "No."

"Are you sure?"

"Why do you care about my dreams, Pasha?"

"Dreams are important."

"They are not important to me. They are nonsense; they are foolishness. They lie."

"Did that dream last night lie to you, Goran?"

"All dreams lie."

"Did it lie or did it show you something you did not want to see?"

Goran snorts and shrugs. "What are you talking about, odd Pasha?"

"Did your dream not show you that the Reformers would rise again? And that you would join them this time? That you would help lead them to victory?"

"Quiet, girl!" Goran ducks his head and looks around the room. "Do you want us all to be arrested?"

"Was that your dream, Goran?"

Goran glances around again. "I refuse to dream those dreams. Those are dangerous dreams, dangerous thoughts. I cannot afford to get my hopes up."

Pasha laughs. "But Goran, silly, they cannot read your thoughts, share your dreams. You are safe within your own mind."

"It seems he is not safe from you," Niki says.

Pasha smiles. "I dreamed about your wife, Niki, last night. Did you dream of her too?"

Niki's face grows quizzical. "Yes."

"And was she safe in your dream?"

"Yes."

"And faithful? And missing you?"

"Yes, she missed me terribly."

"Then I believe it is so," Pasha says, looking deep into Niki's eyes. Her face radiates a confidence that seems to flow from beyond her. She turns to Goran. "Would you like to hear my dream?" she asks.

"Not if it will get us arrested," says Goran.

"Tell us," says Raisa.

"I am with Papa," Pasha starts, "and we walk through a city, my hand in his. The sun makes hard shadows and people are singing. They are singing as they work and as they paint their homes with blues and reds and yellows, and as they tend their lawns, and singing as they walk; and they walk everywhere, wearing flowing dresses and fine suits and shined shoes; and children shed the clothing of labor and they play. We visit. We visit our friends, many friends, and we eat at their tables and they have plenty and offer us chicken and lamb, and we eat and drink and rest. And at the end of the day we sleep an optimistic sleep and dream the dreams of free people."

"That is nonsense," Goran says. "We have not had a day of rest in ages. And the sky has not been blue in half my lifetime, and wherever there should be green grass there is only mud. And people do not leave their homes, parading around in festive dress and eating meat at the tables of others. Singing, no less. We work. Our lives are monochrome; they are black and white and all shades of gray, like the sky and the dirty streets and the grime from the air that coats our houses and turns colors into remnants, and this sameness of color trespasses into our dreams so that even there we cannot enjoy a respite from the unrelenting dullness. There is no color in my dreams as there is no color in my life. How is it you dream in color, Pasha?"

"My father has visions. It is how he dreamed up Reform."

Niki sputters, "Ridiculous, Pasha. Your father is in prison, eight hundred miles away."

"Yes, and at night," Pasha says, "he sends me his dreams. It started right after he was sent away. At first it made him ill, but I've learned to be more receptive. And now I send his dreams to others, and will keep doing it until my father is free again."

"He will never be free until the Old Ones are dead and gone," says Goran.

"Or pushed out again," says Raisa. "Which may keep my husband from the mines. I hope every day and every night that it will happen."

"Then I have no need to send you any dreams, have I, Raisa?" asks Pasha. She smiles and holds Raisa's gaze for a moment.

"I have had enough of this dream talk," says Goran. "We could be discussing fairy tales for all it matters to the real world."

Pasha settles back into her chair and finishes her meal. Her smile curls undaunted and she gazes mostly at Goran, as though she were sizing up an opponent. Niki and Raisa talk about their children while Goran hunches over his meal. His chewing slows, then stops, and he stares at his dried apricots, his face scrunching up as if he remembers something painful. The end-of-lunch whistle sounds and he blinks with a start, sighing and tossing his remainders into his sack.

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A few days later, Goran, Niki, and Raisa glance at Pasha's empty chair as a new packer, young and earnest-looking, tries to sit there. Goran says, "That chair is taken. Find another."

"But no one has sat here for two days," says the dusty-haired young man.

"I do not care that you do not see anyone there," says Goran. "That chair is taken."

The young man pauses. "But if I may sit here just this one day—"

Goran speaks harshly. "We do not need your kind at our table. Leave us alone."

"My kind?" the young man asks, with a smile that could have come from Pasha. "You know my kind, do you?" And he leaves.

"What did you mean by 'his kind,' Goran?" Raisa asks.

Goran leans close and talks low. “They are Reformers, that bunch over there.”

“How do you know?” Niki asks.

“They have asked me to join them.”

“Will you?”

Goran frowns. “What is the use? To lose again?”

The three eat silently and try not to look at one another. The only sounds are of paper unwrapping and apples crunching and water cups being set down. “She will miss her quota,” Niki says finally. “She never misses her quota.”

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Goran quietly pushes the door shut and hangs his coat on the peg in the hall. He takes his lunch sack to the small, tidy kitchen, empties it into the trash, and sets it neatly in its place near the breadbox. He lifts the lid to the pot on the stove, takes a long-handled spoon, and stirs. “Cabbage,” he says, and replaces the lid.

He settles into his tattered beige recliner, which has a large dark spot where his head rests when he falls asleep. The living area lies between the kitchen and the bedroom, and is comfortable enough for the two of them. On one side is a sofa and two chairs, a couple of end tables, and a small television with rabbit-ear antennae. On the other side is the kitchen table with four wooden chairs, only two of which show significant wear. A few pictures, mostly relatives, hang here and there on the walls and a pottery urn—a gift—sits on a shelf above the fireplace. His newspaper is there, but today he leaves it and just sits.

“You’re home early, Goran,” says Dariia, coming from the backyard with a handful of parsley and chives. She bends to kiss him on the head. “Did you make quota?”

Goran sighs. “No, not today. A fabrication machine was down and I ran out of parts. No one could make quota today. Not even...”

Dariia stiffens. “Pasha? The great worker Pasha? Pasha the quota machine?”

“Dariia.”

“Why do you talk always of Pasha?”

“André asked me to look after her.”

“André,” she says, with a downturn in tone.

“He was my friend, Dariia.”

“He almost took you with him to prison.”

“It wasn’t his fault.”

“And where would I be today? Living in Council housing with the cockroaches dancing on my feet in the middle of the night.”

“I should be there too, in prison, if I hadn’t eaten that damned meat stew.”

“But I am glad you did.” Dariia leans over and hugs Goran. “Aren’t you?”

Goran presses his head into her. “Some days, yes, some days, no.”

“Really?” Dariia asks. “Which days no?”

Goran says nothing.

“If you were in prison, who would André have asked to look after Pasha?”

“A fine job I’m doing too. She is so odd. She talks about dreams.”

Dariia pulls back. “Dreams?”

“Yes,” he says. “It is nothing, just craziness.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. It is nothing,” he says. “How long until dinner?”

“Right away, my *draga*.”

Goran smiles and lets her slide away until she is out of reach and into the kitchen.

At dinner, Goran is more quiet than usual. “Pasha wasn’t there today. She has missed three days in a row. I wonder..”

“Wonder what?”

Goran’s look is far away. “Nothing. I wonder nothing.”

Dariia thinks for a long time. “Would you want me to visit tomorrow, to see if she needs anything?”

“You would do that?”

“For you, my *draga*, yes.”

Goran smiles. “No, Dariia, I am sure she is all right. I think she was coming down with a cold or something the other day. That is all.”

Dariia gets up to go to the kitchen. “Still, I could take her something if you like. Some soup maybe. I wish I had chicken soup for her,” she says as she disappears through the door.

“Meat or no meat,” he mimics, “my food is good enough for me.” He laughs. “No, Dariia, do not fret about chicken for dear, contented Pasha.”

Dariia calls from the kitchen, “Did you say something, Goran?”

“No, my *draga*. Nothing of consequence.” He thinks about the dream. Pasha’s dream. He hums absently, a tune from his boyhood. Dariia returns from the kitchen.

“Are you singing, Goran?”

“What?” he asks. “Oh, maybe. I guess. Why?”

“You never sing.”

Goran thinks about that for a moment. “Maybe I should start then,” he says.

Dariia’s worried look won’t go away as she watches Goran almost smile while he ladles a second helping of the cabbage soup.

Goran wipes his chin with a once-white napkin, dulled and frayed despite Dariia’s care. “I was thinking,” he says, “that maybe you are right in wanting to visit Pasha tomorrow. We should make sure she is all right.”

“What should I take her, then, since I have no chicken soup?”

Goran thinks. “Pasha will be happy with anything you bring, but I think she would love a bit of goat’s cheese,” he says. “And fresh bread.”

Dariia nods.

“You could inquire after André.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Just to see how he’s doing. It’s only polite.”

“I do not want to talk about André.”

“She misses him.”

“A girl should miss her father.”

“I miss him too.”

Dariia’s face hardens. “And I,” she says, leaning in, “do *not*.”

“Dariia, *moya lyubavi*, I hardly think he deserves—”

“Do not ‘*moya lyubavi*’ me, husband. You almost went to prison because of him.”

“We almost toppled the Old Ones for good because of him.”

“But you failed, and you did not get to take the place on the Board that André had created for you, and all your friends went to prison. And you, by virtue of the luck of food poisoning, did not.”

“If I had been there—”

“If you had been there, it would have made no difference, and I would not have had anyone—like Pasha’s mother has her—to help me keep the house, and I’d be sitting right now in a Council tenement, sipping broth by candlelight and wondering when you would ever come back to me. No, Goran the lucky, you could not have saved your friends. And you cannot save them now.”

“I am not trying to save them.”

“Don’t tell me that. I know about your dreams.”

“What?”

"I have them too. The same one every night, at first only the beginning of a dream, then each night a little more and then a little more."

Goran stands up, paces the room, runs his hand through his graying hair. "I am sorry. They are meant for me. It is Pasha. She is sending me—us—these dreams. Damn her!"

"How? How can she do that?"

"I do not know. André used talk about visions but I never gave it any mind. And the dreams, they make her ill. The more I resist the harder it is for her—"

"Then maybe she will stop."

"—and she has missed already three days of work, and I do not know how ill she has fallen—"

"Or maybe she will be too ill to send you the dreams."

"—and I cannot let the daughter of André die and..."

"And what, Goran?"

"And last night I let her finish the dream."

"You let her?"

"I had to—for Pasha. Did you see it? It was beautiful. Color everywhere. Happiness. Contentment. Everyone wearing Pasha-smiles. The sun shone as if for the first time in a thousand years."

"Stop it, Goran! I do not want to hear lies. I do not want to talk about the dreams of Reformers."

"Do you want to live like this? Do you not want more?"

"No," she says firmly, then she softens. "Not if it is without you."

Goran stops pacing. He goes to her and wraps his arms around her and she buries her face in his chest and she cries. Goran presses his cheek into her hair. He closes his eyes and lets the colors from the dream fill him. He holds her tighter and kisses her and tears begin to roll down his cheeks and they hold their embrace until they have each given to the other all the unspoken love that is possible, until each has felt the heartbeat of the other and been comforted.

Goran kisses her head again. "But what if, Dariia my love, we can have both?"

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The next day at work, there are again only three. Niki and Raisa keep looking at Goran, who has not spoken. A ray of sun noses in through a corner of a window, erasing the tungsten shadows and casting the room in uncommon brightness.

"Goran, have you heard from Pasha?" Niki asks.

Goran slices an apple. "You mean in real life or in a dream?"

"He means," Raisa says, "do you know if she's all right?"

"I expect her to be better soon."

"So, you've spoken with her?"

"No."

Raisa and Niki wait.

"I let her dream come to me." Goran looks around to make sure no one is watching. "For days and days I resisted; I fought as hard as I could. But the dream was too strong, she was too strong, André was too strong. It dug at me, seeping into the edges of my sleep until it filled my head with color. I tried to push it away, to make it stop, but I could not. Damn her. I hit at her with dream hands and kicked at her with dream feet and I spat out curses with my dream tongue, and still she came. I felt her weakening and I thought I could push her away, but she persisted. And then she missed work, she missed her quota, and it was because of me. I was killing her, and I could not kill the daughter of André, the daughter of the man who once made me believe that life could be more, could be better."

Goran pauses. Raisa touches his arm.

"So two nights ago I let her in."

"And?" Raisa asks.

"And," Goran says, returning to his apple, "maybe now I can get a good night's sleep."

Raisa and Niki nod slowly and they all go back to eating in silence. The young man from the other day walks by the table.

"Hey, young face," Goran says.

He turns.

"What is your name?"

"Ilya."

"Well, Ilya, we have an extra seat, at least for a couple more days. Care to join us?"

Ilya looks at his friends at the other table, who look at Goran. Everyone's eyes meet for a second. Ilya's eyes question Goran's friends. Raisa nods and Niki shrugs.

Ilya sits and unpacks his lunch in an uncomfortable silence. Goran watches with amusement as he arranges his food on his napkin.

"No meat for you?" Goran says.

"Not today," says Ilya.

Goran nods. "For me neither," he says, "but I am hoping that tomorrow will be different."

Contributor Biographies

Charlie Anders (www.charlieanders.com) is the author of *Choir Boy*, which won a Lambda Literary Award and was a finalist for the Edmund White Award. She's also the co-editor of *She's Such A Geek: Women Write About Science, Technology And Other Nerdy Stuff*. She publishes other magazine (www.othermag.org) and organizes the award-winning Writers With Drinks reading series. Her writing has appeared in *McSweeney's.net*, *Pindeldyboz.com*, *Salon.com*, *the San Francisco Chronicle*, *Paraspheres: New Wave Fabulist Fiction*, *StrangeHorizons.com*, *ZZZZYVA* and *Space & Time*.

Joshua Babcock lives in upstate New York with his wife and six cats. He is a graduate of Vassar College and teaches at a school for students with dyslexia. His story, "Compromise," appeared in *Kenoma* magazine. "The Tome of the Time-Siege" won second place in Gom Publishing's The Best New Sci-Fi and Fantasy for 2004 contest and appears in the accompanying anthology. He can be reached at babcats@optonline.net.

Rusty Barnes lives in Revere MA with his family. His stories have appeared in journals like *Pindeldyboz*, *SmokeLong Quarterly*, and *Red Rock Review*. You can find more information at <http://www.rustybarnes.com>.

Bruce Boston holds the distinctions of having appeared in more issues of Asimov's SF than any other author, and of coining the word "cybertext." Visit <http://hometown.aol.com/bruboston>

Lida Broadhurst lives in northern California with her husband and a fat orange tabby. She has had her poetry and short stories published extensively in the small press. Forthcoming work will appear in ***Mythic Delirium***, ***Rogue Worlds*** and ***Bare Bone***.

Benjamin Buchholz is a US Army Officer just recently returned from Iraq. His fiction and poetry have appeared widely in the last year or two at places like *GoodFoot*, *Tarpaulin Sky*, *Identity Theory*, *MadHatters*, *Ghoti*, *MiPoesias*, *Opium* and *Planet Magazine*. His website, www.benjaminbuchholz.com, contains a few links and other oddities that you or your friends might find interesting.

David Bulley has published short fiction in *Night Train*, *McSweeney's*, *Words & Images*, *Porcupine*, *Opium*, and many other venues. His novel, *Weapon in Heaven*, is forthcoming from Cavern Press. He owns and operates Scrawl: the Writers Asylum, an online writer's community. <http://www.STWA.net>, <http://www.DavidBulley.com>

Chris Butler is the author of the novel *Any Time Now* (Wildside Press, 2001). His short fiction has been published by magazines such as *Interzone* and *Albedo One*. Chris's website is at www.chris-butler.co.uk.

Sarah Coyne moved to Boston in 1999 from a lush forested town in southern New Hampshire. Since migrating south she has earned a BFA in illustration, almost adjusted to city life and sold her work as 2-D fine art, as well as illustrations applied to everyday items such as pillows, t-shirts, stationery and bags. Sarah's artistic pursuits and obvious small-town heart of gold have found her many good friends, both human and animal. While missing the greenery of her childhood, Sarah has been making her adopted home a little cuter with her bright, lively illustrations and paintings of animals and other light fare while also honing her acerbic wit and dark sense of humor with a few more sinister subjects. Favorite media include oils, watercolors and acrylics on unfinished wood, decorative calico prints and large scale canvases. Her work can be viewed at www.eggagogo.com and can be found at a number of stores and galleries in New England and beyond. Sarah can be contacted through her website.

Neil Davies was born in 1979 in the middle of England. He works in a university somewhere, and this is his first piece of published fiction.

Larry Dickison's art and cartoons have appeared in hundreds of publications, including *Dark Fantasy*, *The Gate*, *Argonaut*, and *Thin Ice*. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.

William Doreski, Professor of English, Keene State College (New Hampshire), teaches creative writing, literary theory, and modern poetry. Born in Connecticut, he lived in Boston, Cambridge, and Arlington (MA) for many years, attended various colleges, and after a certain amount of angst received a Ph.D. from Boston University. After teaching at Goddard, Harvard, and Emerson colleges, he came to Keene State in 1982. He has published several collections of poetry, most recently *Sacra Via* (Tatlock Publications, 2005) and *Another Ice Age* (Cedar Hill, 2006), and three critical studies—*The Years of Our Friendship: Robert Lowell and Allen Tate* (University Press of Mississippi, 1990), *The Modern Voice in American Poetry* (University Press of Florida, 1995), *Robert Lowell's Shifting Colors* (Ohio University Press, 1999), and a textbook entitled *How to Read and Interpret Poetry* (Prentice-Hall). His critical essays, poetry, and reviews have appeared in many academic and literary journals, including *Massachusetts Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *The Alembic*, *New England Quarterly*, *Harvard Review*, *Modern Philology*, *Antioch Review*, and *Natural Bridge*.

Errid Farland lives in Southern California and writes at a cluttered table where a candle burns to create an aura of serenity. Sometimes she accidentally catches things on fire which turns the aura into angry yellows and reds and sort of wrecks the whole serenity thing. Her stories have appeared in *UndergroundVoices*, *storySouth*, *Pindeldyboz*, and other places.

Russian artist **Fefa** is 23 years old and has always been engaged in art. In her creativity and in her life there have always been much imagination and many animals. Both surround her and overflow from within. It is not so important, to her, what technique or material she works with; the main thing is to create.

Michelle Garren Flye lives on the coast of North Carolina. She walks on the beach whenever she can. She loves cats, kids and her husband. For more information, visit <http://www.geocities.com/mgflye>.

Janrae Frank is the author of the best-selling ebook series *Dark Brothers of the Light* and co-author with Phil Smith of the *Mother Damnation* series.

Jamie Dee Galey is not that tall but has a nice smile. You can reach him and check out his work at <http://iamjamie.com>.

Fran Giordano is an artist living in Schenectady NY. She has made, shown and sold work professionally for at least a dozen years. Her work has been sold to collectors all over the globe, and shown in art galleries in the Northeast. She has worked over the years as a college photo instructor and art teacher. She's dealt with themes such as duality, theology, and happiness and it's pursuit. She explores many different medium depending on the conceptual unpinning of the work. In the last few years she has considered the mediums of painting, photography, and digital imaging.

A.B. Goelman has published short stories in *On Spec*, the *L. Ron Hubbard Writers of the Future* anthology, and *Dragon, Knights and Angels*. His next short story will be appearing in the Spring issue of *Fantasy Magazine*. He lives in the Pacific Northwest with his wife and the rain.

Beverly A. Jackson is a poet and fiction writer residing in North Carolina. Her work has appeared in print and online in many journals. She was Editor in Chief and Publisher of *Ink Pot*, and *Lit Pot Press* until 2005. Visit her blog at www.beverlyajackson.com.

Born September 11th, 1981, failed astronaut and race car driver **Konrad Kruszewski** is a mostly self-taught multi-instrumentalist, dabbling if not specializing in illustration, storytelling, photography, music, and all aspects CG and traditional animation. He has earned a diploma in Advanced Studies in Character Animation at AnimationMentor, where he was directly guided by the finest animators at Pixar, ILM, and Disney, among others. Konrad is currently keeping busy with animation and graphic design in Northern California with no kids, no dogs, and no immediate aspirations to obtain either.

John Mantooth writes short stories that fall between the cracks in the genre sidewalk. His most recent publications include *The Shadow Regions Anthology*, *Electric Velocipede*, and *Shimmer*.

Originally from NYC, **Allen McGill** lives, writes, acts and directs theatre in Mexico. His published fiction, non-fiction, poetry, plays, photos, etc., have won awards and appeared in *New York Times*, *The Writer*, *Newsday*, *Literary Potpourri*, *Poetry Midwest*, *QLRS*, *Heron's Nest*, *Frogpond*, *Modern Haiku*, *World Haiku Review*, and many others. He is a former member of PEN. He was an invited guest at the First World Poetry Festival in Taiwan 2005, haibun editor for *Simply Haiku*, and two of his plays have been professionally produced in Sacramento and L.A. His first book of poetry, *SUNSEEKERS, a selection of haiku and haibun by Allen McGill*, is to be published this Fall by Golden Swamp Warbler Press. His website can be reached via <http://tinyurl.com/m7il>.

Debbie Moorhouse is a British writer who also takes photographs. She reads slush for *Andromeda Spaceways Inflight Magazine* and is always writing a novel. Her website is at <http://www.alternatespecies.com>, where you can read stuff, look at photos and generally hang out.

Kristine Ong Muslim has more than three hundred stories and poems published/forthcoming in genre and mainstream publications, which include *Adbusters*, *Aoife's Kiss*, *Dark Recesses*, *Dark Wisdom*, *Electric Velocipede*, *Grendel'song*, *Star*Line*, *Surreal Magazine*, and *The Pedestal Magazine*. Her publication credits are listed at <http://www.freewebs.com/blackroom8>.

Shweta Narayan writes fantasy and research papers, and attempts to keep the two distinct. She lives physically in southern California, and virtually at shwetambari.deviantart.com, where she houses images that don't have a story yet. "The Doctrine of the Arbitrariness of the Sign" is her first non-academic publication.

Working alongside Kaolin Fire (then Stockinger), **Robert Peake** used to teach programming languages to other undergraduates at U.C. Berkeley before earning his degree in English literature, emphasis poetry. These days he serves as the Chief Technology Officer for The David Allen Company, where he reads, writes, and thinks about many things in many languages. Robert is also currently studying poetry in the MFA in Writing program at Pacific University in Oregon. He lives in Ojai, California with his wife, Valerie and cat, Miranda.

A native of Boston, Massachusetts, **Kenneth Ryan's** short fiction and poetry can be found in a number of literary journals, both online and at newsstands. He recently completed his first novel, *Hiders*, and is hard at work on his second. He shares a home, a life, and a website with Nadine Darling, a national treasure. Details at www.kennay.com.

F. John Sharp lives and works in the Cleveland area. His work has appeared in *Pindelydbox*, *Paumanok Review*, *Salt River Review*, *Lunarosity*, *Prose Ax*, and *Quantum Muse*, among others. He has edited the journals *Story Garden*, *Right Hand Pointing*, and *Night Train*. Visit his website at FJohnSharp.com.

Tomi Shaw lives in Kentucky amid the clutter of her work, three daughters, husband's toys and a shedding orange mutt. She has a fuzzy home. Her work has appeared in over fifty publications, including *Identity Theory*, *Barcelona Review*, *Pindelydbox* and *storySouth*. www.tomishaw.com

Sarah Singleton is the author of award-winning gothic fantasy *Century* (2005) and *Heretic* (2006), both published by Simon & Schuster. Her first novel, *The Crow Maiden* (Wildside Press), was shortlisted for the Crawford Award. Sarah's website is at www.crowmaiden.plus.com.

By day, **Jason Stoddard** is just another frustrated engineer-turned-ad-guy who is busy twisting the minds of millions of consumers for his evil corporate masters. At night, he writes science fiction that has been seen in *Sci Fiction*, *Interzone*, *Strange Horizons*, *Talebones* and *Futurismic*, among others. Unfortunately, none of the agents or editors have yet believed his line that if he had a book deal, there would be less advertising in this world.

Rohith Sundararaman lives in Bombay, India. He gets his inspiration from the cow that never roamed the streets of Bombay. He has been published elsewhere and receives half a death threat every month for the same.

Lavie Tidhar grew up on a kibbutz in Israel, lived in Israel and South Africa, travelled widely in Africa and Asia, and has lived in London for a number of years. He is the winner of the 2003 Clarke-Bradbury Prize (awarded by the European Space Agency), was the editor of *Michael Marshall Smith: The Annotated Bibliography* (PS Publishing, 2004) and the anthology *A Dick & Jane Primer for Adults* (The British Fantasy Society, 2006), and is the author of the novella *An Occupation of Angels* (Pendragon Press, 2005). His stories appear in *Sci Fiction*, *Chizine*, *Postscripts*, *Nemonymous*, *Infinity Plus*, *Aeon*, *The Book of Dark Wisdom*, *Fortean Bureau* and many others, and in translation in seven languages.

John Walters is an American writer, a Clarion graduate, currently living in Greece with his Greek wife and five sons. To pay the bills he teaches English as a second language. He has had stories published in *Talebones*, *Altair*, *Full Unit Hookup*, and other magazines.

Athena Workman is a married mother of two terrific girls living in Tennessee. Her stories have appeared in over twenty-two publications, including *Corpse Blossoms*, *Apex Digest*, *Nocturnal Ooze*, *The Dark Krypt*, *Neverary*, and *AlienSkin*. She's also been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the Southeastern Science Fiction Achievement Award. Recently, she began dabbling in photography, and plunged back into her childhood love of drawing. She runs the site Miss Millificent's World (<http://www.missmillificent.com>), a showcase of her various forms of artwork, and the online shop Kaleidoscope Farm.