

## SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY/HORROR

### 3Q 3P M J

Abouzeid, Chris. **Anatopsis**. Dutton, 2006. 280p. \$16.99. 0-525-47583-4.

Princess Anatopsis Solomon's immortal heritage proves a burden—she longs to quest as a knight errant like her father, but her mother, chair of Amalgamated Witchcraft Corporation, decrees that Ana must lead the charge to overthrow their archrival, King Georges, chair of Consolidated Necromantic Industries. So Ana begins lessons with the cold, mysterious Mr. Pound, lessons shared by Prince Barnaby Georges, the inept but good-hearted scion of the rival royal house. They are soon involved in intrigue, as Mr. Pound searches for the powerful artifact Os Divinitas that will fulfill an ancient prophecy, reuniting Immortals and Mortals divided by the treachery of Prometheus.

This novel is a fun blend of fantasy, mythology, adventure, and intrigue in a wholly imagined world whose survival depends on two intrepid young people—and Uno, the last dog in the Universe.—Mary Arnold.

*VOYA April 2006, p. 56.*

### 5Q 4P J S

**Dreams and Visions: Fourteen Flights of Fantasy**. M. Jerry Weiss and Helen S. Weiss, Eds. Starscape/Tor, 2006. 256p. \$19.95. 0-765-31249-2.

What if one person's beliefs could change the course of human history? What happens when all one knows is simply a lie? What if the woman who lives next door in one's suburban neighborhood is actually a wicked witch from a dark fairy tale? These premises comprise just a few of the story lines in fourteen tales that blend the line between fantasy and reality. With an impressive list of contributors, including Joan Bauer, Tamora Pierce, David Lubar, and Suzanne Fisher Staples, this collection offers a bit of everything. A seemingly ordinary girl attempts to break her way into the male-dominated world of magicians. Another girl uses the magic of Shakespeare to save her mother from her own destruction. A boy finds that he has the power to decide whether visiting aliens from outer space come to destroy the Earth or come in peace. Although each story finds its own voice, lightly dipping its toes in the unknown or jumping head first into a world of magic, together they manage to create a larger work. This collection manages at once to entertain and surprise while offering a feeling of hopefulness.

As is often the case in collections, some stories are stronger than others, but not one is completely without merit. Some seem grown straight from the world of fairy tales and

the oral tradition while others seem to be born of pure imagination. It is a strong collection that surprises and delights with every turn of the page.—Heather Hepler.

*VOYA April 2006, p. 58.*

#### **4Q 4P S**

**Firebirds Rising: An Anthology of Original Science Fiction and Fantasy.** Sharyn November, Ed. Firebird/Penguin Putnam, 2006. 530p. \$19.99 Trade pb. 0-14-240549-3.

November's second anthology of original science fiction and fantasy by top names in the field is a literate and entertaining collection. The selections are sophisticated enough to satisfy older readers, and the prevalence of young adult protagonists ensures that teen readers will feel at home in these pages. In the opening story, *Huntress* by Tamora Pierce, a high school freshman believes that her track scholarship to an elite school will help her rise above her mother's strange New Age ways, but she soon finds that the track team's cutthroat nature might make some goddess-like protection desirable after all. The story is compelling and just creepy enough, and is an excellent choice to open the anthology.

It should be noted that only a quarter of the stories are science fiction, an imbalance that the editor indicates she hopes to address in future volumes. Unfortunately two of the SF stories, *The Real Thing* by Alison Goodman and *Perception* by Alan Dean Foster, slide into heavy-handedness, and the latter story is not particularly original or even entertaining. The fantasy stories are far more successful, and several are lovely without being saccharine. In the *House of the Seven Librarians* by Ellen Klages will hold particular appeal for bookworms, whereas *The Wizards of Perfil* by Kelly Link gently mocks wizardly clichés, and both stories involve very satisfying comings-of-age. Overall this anthology is a wonderful choice for any young adult collection.—Amy Sisson.

*VOYA April 2006, p. 59.*

#### **3Q 5P M J**

Patterson, James. **Maximum Ride: School's Out Forever.** Little, Brown, 2006. 409p. \$16.99. 0-316-15559-4.

This sequel picks up where last year's popular **Maximum Ride: The Angel Experiment** (Little, Brown, 2005/**VOYA** April 2005) left off, with the six angel-human hybrids in mid-flight with their dog, en route from New York to Washington, D.C., searching for information about their parents and their creation. The story alternates between the first-person narration of fourteen-year-old Max, the group's mother figure, and the third-person narration that moves the story along, mostly following the actions of the hybrids' nemeses, the Erasers, and the evil scientist who created both types of mutant. When

one of the flock is seriously injured and taken to a hospital, the FBI steps in and sends the group to live under observation at the country home of a high-ranking agent. There they attend school and live quietly for a while, but they still pursue the identities of their parents in secret. When the Erasers catch up to them, Max listens to the often-present voice in her head and takes the flock to Florida, where they confront their creator and the conglomerate corporation that was behind their creation.

As with the first book, the action is fast paced and keeps the reader engaged. The story this time is not so sinister, in part because the graphic laboratory scenes that were so prevalent in the first book are absent. The author raises the question of family and relationships when one member of the flock is exploited by his newfound parents and quickly returns to Max's care. The ending is ambiguous and open for another installment, should Patterson choose to write one.—Jenny Ingram.

This novel is a compelling sequel to a compelling first book. It grabs readers straight from the start and reels them in with new excitements on every page. Adventure, fighting, backstabbing, and love abound throughout the book, while still allotting time to develop characters one cares about. Patterson satisfies fans of the series by incorporating new plot lines into the story, while still using the ones laid out in the first book. It sets up well for a third book, which is destined to be another delight, in which Max might actually save the world. 4Q 4P—Rebecca Moreland, *Teen Reviewer*.

*VOYA* April 2006, p. 64.

### 3Q 3P M J

Pike, Christopher. **The Shaktra**. Tor, 2005. 366p. \$17.95. 0-765-30199-6.

A month has passed since Ali discovered she is Alosha, Queen of the Fairies, in **Alosha** (Tor, 2004/*VOYA* October 2004). She also learned that her long-missing mother may be in the elemental world and that an entity called the Shaktra is inciting other elemental beings to invade the human world. Increasingly aware that her human world is unhealthy for Paddy and Farble, the leprechaun and troll who have been living with her, Ali determines to help them return safely to the elemental world, and search for her mother—and the Shaktra. Meanwhile Steve and Cindy, Ali's two closest friends, ignore her admonishments to stay away from the nearby town of Toule, where they begin investigating Sheri Smith, who is the president of the video game company Omega Overtures and whom Steve suspects of having a connection to the Shaktra. As their parallel quests unfold in the elemental world and the human world, the three friends discover unsuspected personal strengths, unexpected allies, and unforeseen depths to their individual identities. All the while, the clash between elemental and physical beings looms.

With mythic elements more evident, this sequel is better written than its predecessor. Despite shallow character development and stilted dialogue, young fantasy readers will

be engrossed by the abundance of action and adventure as the plot develops through myriad unanticipated twists and turns. A departure from Pike's usual genre, this series will carry Pike fans into a new reading realm.—Kim Carter.

**The Shaktra** is about as uneventful as a bowl of vanilla ice cream with sprinkles on top. It may be better than the unadorned scoop of just-plain-vanilla, but it is nothing to yell skyward about. Chock-full of stereotypes (elementals, leprechauns after gold, high fairies, dark fairies, etc.), and easy reading will make this book appealing to the masses. I prefer less predictable high fantasy, like *The Essential Bordertown* or any of the *Xanth* novels. 2Q 4P—Shane Bell, *Teen Reviewer*.

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