

# books

## Unsolved Mysteries

Recent titles explore human penchant for self-destruction, potential power of femme mystique

### The Stone Gods

by Jeanette Winterson; Harcourt, 2008; \$24 hardcover

With global warming, increased dependence on technology and a society where success is measured in growth and consumption, it's not difficult to imagine a world that can no longer support our needs. Lesbian author Jeanette Winterson's latest novel, *The Stone Gods*, takes readers to the ends of such worlds, so to speak, as she explores a seemingly human penchant for self-destruction.

The story begins with Billie Crusoe at a time when planet Orbus has been all but destroyed by human carelessness. Billie, with a healthy skepticism for technology, is forced to join an early mission to the newly discovered Planet Blue—a pristine planet perfect to replace Orbus except for one thing: the dinosaurs. Among her shipmates are Captain Handsome, the story's Han Solo; Pink, a stereotypical bimbo; and Spike, a sexy Robo sapiens—a robot designed to save humans the responsibility of thinking. When things go wrong, as they inevitably do when elements beyond human control interfere, Billie finds herself shipwrecked with

Spike as a human-instigated Ice Age descends on Planet Blue.

In characteristic Winterson fashion, worlds repeat. Civilizations destroy themselves and are reborn; the same mistakes are made over again. As hopes for a new life fade for Billie and Spike on Planet Blue, so do hopes for Billy Crusoe, inadvertently abandoned on Easter Island in 1774. Here, Billy finds another civilization on the brink of collapse with two warring factions and a landscape decimated in the creation of the island's giant stone heads.

And then there is Billie Crusoe, abandoned as a baby, who finds herself caught between Tech City and Wreck City at a time when the world is recovering from war and Robo sapiens have yet to be developed beyond Spike's head.

Readers familiar with Winterson's previous works will recognize the blurring of boundaries between the future and the past and the longing for things lost and things not yet found. *The Stone Gods* is an intricately layered novel—and part cautionary tale—that ultimately suggests we may have within ourselves all that we need.

—Karen Kudej

### Glamour Girls: Femme/Femme Erotica

Edited by Rachel Kramer Bussel; Haworth Press, 2006; \$16.95 softcover

Sugar and spice and everything nice—that's what femme/femme love is made of. Unfortunately for femme women who love and desire other femme women, not everyone sees the visceral heat of such a combination. As editor/writer Rachel Kramer Bussel points out in the thoughtful and engaging introduction to *Glamour Girls: Femme/Femme Erotica*, an anthology in praise of the new love that dare not speak its name, some consider the double dose of sensual femininity to be nothing more than "air on air." She and 25 other writers unapologetically, articulately and erotically disagree.

While the queer community has fought hard to expand the mainstream's understanding and acceptance of same-sex love, it has struggled with its own discomfort with femme/femme fornication, seeing it as an affirmation of sexual stereotypes that the proper lesbian or bisexual should eschew. Sex worker-centric stories including Kramer Bussel's "Lap Dance Lust," Lori Selki's



"Diary of a Lost Child, Part I" and Jen Collins' "The G String" are a partial response to such misconceptions and offer peeks into the unique world within which femme-loving femme sex professionals explore their mutual attractions.

Tantalizing insights into the potential power of the femme mystique are further revealed in stories such as "Two Girls in the Basement" by Cheryl B. and "Dressing Desire" by Tenille Brown, each of which tells the story of a bi-curious woman, a character increasingly familiar to the real world of femme romance and lust.

It is precisely this real world that Kramer Bussel and her mostly female literary companions present in this often thoughtful, frequently delightful celebration of the femme/femme love continuum. Whether a nervous novice removing another woman's clothing for the first time or a confident daughter of Sapphos urgently pressing her painted lips against those of another, the femmes in this collection prove that they and their passion are more than merely "air on air."

—Theresa "Darklady" Reed

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