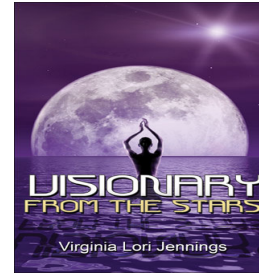
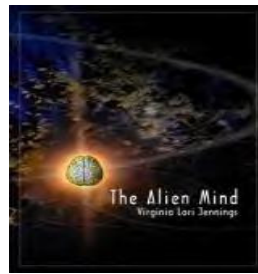


An Interview with Virginia Jennings, a Sci-Fic/Fantasy author

By:

TANNIA E. ORTIZ-LOPES

<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>



1) Tell us about yourself

I am the author of two science fiction books called *The Alien Mind* (December 2005) and *Visionary from the Stars* (January 2007).

I was born in April 1987 in the state of New Hampshire. I love to write and I have been doing so since the sixth grade. I was Home Schooled from seventh grade and graduated at 16 with a GED. Because I was Home Schooled, my family had a big impact on my writing.

I am also a licensed Real Estate Agent, though right now I am inactive. I enjoy Astronomy and all things science fiction/ space related.

Lately, I spend a lot of my time managing a guild in Neopets where I try to be a role model for young writers. I encourage them by offering advice and support to their work, as well as insight into the writing world. I put the information at their fingertips. I do the same thing as well on my Myspace site, though there I am mainly trying to reach out to the teenage population who enjoy writing. I am readily available at these places to answer questions and offer advice and support to new writers, as I make sure I check these sites almost daily.

You may find out more about me, as well as links to my Myspace and Neopets sites at: www.virginiajennings.zoomshare.com

2) How much influence over your writings has your home schooling up bringing?

Home Schooling gave me the free time to develop my craft and allowed me the freedom to write the stories that were filling my head. I also had access to the library more often.

3) You have been writing since sixth grade, what motivated you? When did you have your first publishing break?

While I was in sixth grade I began having problems falling asleep at night. I then began creating stories in my head to help me fall asleep; these stories began to grow and compile until I decided to write them down... I had shown one of my short stories to my English Teacher who encouraged me to continue and once I saw the amount of writing I was able to get down I became 'motivated' to continue writing.

My first published break was June 29th 2005 when I signed the contract with Rose Dog Books for my first book *The Alien Mind*.

4) What events in your life encouraged you to become a professional writer?

Nothing particular in the past that I can think of... I saw the creation that I had written and I wanted to see it in print...I had read stories of how other authors got published and I became inspired to try myself. After that I found that I still had more stories that I wanted to get out!

I had been thinking, a short while ago, about letting that dream go. However, it was my husband that encouraged me to continue and also to try a different genre to help jumpstart my creative side.

5) You have written two Sci-Fi books; *The Alien Mind* (2005 Rosedog Books) and *Visionary from the Stars*. (2007 Publish America). Tell us about them.

From the Back cover of *The Alien Mind*:

"Young Rivinaig details her adventures and her trials since being abducted along with several other children, by a group of aliens called the Aruk. We learn that these children are later rescued from captivity by another group of aliens who adopt and raise the children. Their new alien families teach them how to use their full brain capacity, enabling the children to learn to defy the laws of physics and develop advanced mental gifts. However, the Aruk are out for revenge and the children must once again fight for their freedom"

The Alien Mind is about the struggles a young girl must face after being kidnapped by aliens and many years later finally returning to Earth. The book's understory deals with the way she struggles to let go of the problems of her past, as she later finds herself face to face with her kidnappers once more. The young girl finds it difficult to give those problems to God because of all she has been through, and ends up reliving her past every night in her nightmares. With the help of a friend she finally realizes what she has been keeping from God and that she needs to let God help her with her emotional struggle before she will be whole again and free of her nightmares and turmoil.

From the back cover of *Visionary from the Stars*:

"A lone scientist, while observing the activities of a planetary object from her spaceship, is faced with the unbelievable proof that aliens do exist. For centuries, humans have thought that we are the only ones in this galaxy...and here, forcing its way onto her ship, is an alien species

claiming to have humanity's best interest in mind. Meanwhile, the Star Traveler's crew sets out on a camping trip on the surface of the moon. They stumble upon an object covered in alien writing that gives them the first piece of a galactic map. Unknown to them, it will lead them into an intergalactic controversy, with a group of aliens called the Platonians striving to sabotage their every move."

In the book you will find out that the galactic map is left behind on the moon by an intergalactic alien missionary. The Star Traveler crew finds out that by searching for these alien relics they are heading on a journey towards finding a Galactic Bible. The premise of this story is based off of a conversation with my dad: "If god created us, could he not have created other life out in the universe?" If so, then like us, they too would probably need some sort of bible to help and guide them to do what their creator wants them to. I began thinking that an alien missionary, because of his intentions to spread the gospel, would compile all of these bibles since they are all from the same God.

Along the way to finding this Bible, the Star Traveler Crew is faced by many hurdles set for them by a group of fascist Aliens called the Platonians who are trying to stop the crew from finding the Galactic Bible.

6) You used two different publishing house to publish your books, why?

I used two different publishing houses frankly because I paid \$2,765 to Rose Dog Books to have my first one published. It is a subsidy print on demand publisher. I chose this route for my first book because I wanted a way to get my name out there and I did not have many resources to do the research to find a traditional publisher. I did not have internet at home and could not drive myself to the library at the time so it was extremely difficult to query publishers, I was also under 18 and kept being told by agents that they would not represent me because I was underage.

My second book was published by another Print on Demand (POD) company I had found online. They are not a subsidy publisher so I did not pay to have my book printed, I also appreciated the amount of help they offer in helping promote my work.

However I have come across some disadvantages to POD publishing and will try to find either an agent or a traditional publisher for my second book... some of the disadvantages include not being able to get bookstores to stock your books on the shelves because of the POD status as well as some the fact that some POD publishers will not allow them to return unsold books. I have been told, however, that Publish America does allow book returns.

7) Where can our readers buy your books?

Readers can either buy my books from the links on my website or from:

[Visionary from the Stars](#)

Available through:

www.publishamerica.com (straight from the publisher)

amazon.com

Books-a-million

Barnes and Noble
Also at Borders/WaldenBooks Stores

The Alien Mind

Available through:
www.rosedogbookstore.com (straight from the publisher)
amazon.com
and Borders/Walden Books Stores

They can also send me an e-mail for information on how to order autographed copies at jennings.vlj@hotmail.com

8) What do you consider a writer's biggest writing challenge Sci-Fi or Fantasy? Which one you like the most and why?

I can't answer this question completely yet. The challenges of Sci-fi and Fantasy for me differ but right now they remain equally challenging. For Sci-fi it is the problem of having to guard yourself against creating problems in your story that jar your reader out of the story with "Hey that can't happen!" Like allowing your character to travel outside his ship into space with no suit and not explaining how he survived! You constantly have to be on guard that you don't get so wrapped up in your writing that you overlook some simple problem like that. In Sci-Fi you are able to travel among the stars, with Fantasy you pretty much stay on one land or planet... It has been quite a challenge for me to change my perspective!

As for which one I like best... Come back and be sure to ask me after I have finished my current fantasy book! J

9) Jules Verne's is known as the father of Sci-Fi writing because his vivid imagination lead the way to great scientific discoveries such as the development of submarines. Did his writing have any influence in your decision to write Sci-Fi/Fantasy genre?

I read Jules Verne some time after I had started writing so I would not say that he influenced me much. However, my main influence was NASA and all the movies I saw where NASA was sending people into space. I started collecting all sorts of pictures and articles and as I gained the knowledge just out of hobby I became empowered to write science fiction. Also my hobby of astronomy later helped me describe the planets and the space thorough which my characters were traveling more realistically than I would have with out the knowledge from my hobby!

I'd say the writings of Brian Jaques (author of the series 'Redwall') were the ones that got me interested in fantasy.

10) Do you think a writer's imagination and writings could be at times prophetic?

Do I think that a writer's imagination and writings can look to be prophetic, yes... but are they... no. Writers simply supply the ideas because we are so open to the ideas out

imagination gives us. Others who are more grounded to the earth may not be able to conceive these ideas. But once we release our books and millions of people read them, our ideas can be made to come true if only someone reads it who has enough money and a person who has enough brains and also has the guts to try it!

11) Tell us about your Neopets guild. How can our young readers join your group? Do you have a website?

My neopets guild can be found at: <http://www.neopets.com/guilds/guild.phtml?id=1930318> . I set up this guild to help, encourage and offer constructive advice to the young writers in the neopets site. There are currently four activities running in my guild. There is a Neverending story, a poetry creation activity where I challenge you with a topic, a write for review section where you can submit your own work or review others works, and also a writing guest where you find items according to the current theme. Each activity earns you points towards prizes. Young readers can join the group by first joining neopets (www.neopets.com it's free!) and then going to my guild and clicking on the link to join! My username is space_explorer. You can also find a link to my neopets guild at my website www.virginiajennings.zoomshare.com

12) Why did you decide to change your pen name from Virginia Lori Jennings to V.L. Jennings for the publishing of your third book? Tell us about your third book experiment at your page at <http://www.myspace.com/virginiajennings>

I decided to change my pen name from Virginia Lori Jennings to V.L. Jennings for a few reasons. At the top of my list stands the fact that I am transitioning from Science Fiction into Fantasy and I wanted readers to be able to tell the difference... besides the fact that my husband and I thought it sounded better. Also the interesting thing is that my first two books were written under my actual name (which then changed to Virginia Yarborough once I got married) so writing my new book under V.L. Jennings will actually be my first penname. I have found that writing under a penname empowers me to put aside the Sci-Fi part of me and try something new!

My third book which can be found at www.virginiajennings.zoomshare.com under Book Experiment is about 12 kids who help rescue a land from the creatures who are trying to enslave it and return the magic to the land's inhabitants while realizing that the magic inside them is actually their own imagination. I have not yet set the Title and the entire concept is not yet complete as I am still working on the foundation of the story. The idea of the 'Book Experiment' is actually to write my entire book online where readers can offer their own criticism and advice (good and bad). Near the end of my book I will not post the last few chapters (ending at a cliffhanger) and then take the entire book off of my web pages. I will then put the entire book through a full rewrite and edit to prepare the book to be sent to the publishers. Once I have a publisher I will post an update on my site as to when readers will be able to purchase my book and find out the ending to a story that they have followed from the beginning!

13) How can our readers contact you?

I could be contacted via e-mail at: jennings.vlj@hotmail.com

14) A word of advice to new writers.

Never give up! Always try to do your best and keep on learning. Read what you write as if you were an outside reader instead of the author, this will help you find weak spots. Read all you can. And never fear asking for advice or worry over criticism that you have been given, even if it is harsh it can help you if you get over the initial irritation.



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