

Interview: Dan Stone



Dan Stone is an author, poet, life coach, and college instructor whose fiction, poetry and essays have appeared in *Focus on the Fabulous: Colorado GLBT Voices*, *Charmed Lives: Gay Spirit in Storytelling*, *White Crane Journal*, *A&U Magazine*, *Astropoetica*, *Mostly Maine*, *Bay Windows*, *Chiron Review*, *Queer Poets Journal*, *Gents*, *Badboys*, and *Barbarians*, *New Gay Male Poetry*, and *Rebel Yell: Stories by Contemporary Southern Gay Authors*. He lives in Denver, CO, where he is working on his second novel, a collection of poems, and a children's book. His website is: www.firstadream.com.

Lethe Press has just released his first novel, *The Rest of Our lives*, with cover by Peter Grahame. Steve Berman spoke with Dan about his new book.

Steve Berman: How did you come up with the story of *The Rest of Our Lives*?

Dan Stone: The idea for *The Rest of Our Lives* was born from my own lifelong love affair with romance and magic. In ways, I'm a typical Pisces dreamer, and the dream of an extraordinary, magical, enduring love is one I've been dreaming for as long as I can remember. As a gay man, I seem to be always hungry for stories of love between men, particularly when they capture elements of my own experiences and my own dreams. Once I learned the secret of getting out of my own way as a writer and not trying to 'make' a story happen, the enchanted and enchanting characters in this book literally appeared out of thin air and started showing and telling me their story. It was truly a labor of love—theirs for each other and mine for them—that brought this incarnation of *The Rest of Our Lives* to life.

Steve: Your novel is set in Washington, DC. Why that city for an author living in Colorado?

Dan: DC was home to me, off and on, for many years, and I was living there when I started writing the book. The book was nearly finished by the time I moved to Colorado.

Steve: Your main characters are witches. That's actually not too common in contemporary gay fantasy. What do you believe is magical about life?

Dan: I've been fascinated with magic and myth since I was a child and have enjoyed the companionship of the powerful, mystical beings that spring from the brow of other authors and proceed to illuminate my own very human challenges and concerns—particularly when they invite me not to take those concerns too seriously. I've devoured everything from classical Greek and Norse and Celtic mythology to the elaborately detailed fantasy realms of Camelot and Mercedes Lackey's Valdemar and J.K. Rowling's Hogwarts to the pop culture simplicities of "Bewitched" and "Charmed." A fascination with various traditions of mysticism and magic and with any world—real or imagined—that offered glimpses of both the seen and the unseen aspects of the Universe led me to explore more openly my own connection to the source of inspiration and creativity that I believe any of us can access when we are willing to ask the questions that we really care about and then get quiet enough to hear the answers.

Steve: I like how you extrapolated abilities from the raw elements—a cold weather witch could 'freeze' such things as time, while his hot weather counterpart is hyper. Mind telling us more about how you developed the fantastical powers?

Dan: The initial concept for this book was based on the magical Norse legend of fire and ice and on the creative power of opposites attracting. I was always drawn to mythic and epic romances, particularly between male heroes, human or superhuman—and to the idea of how exceptional abilities or gifts play out in the lives of people who possess them. Colm's character and abilities emerged first and then Aidan's character and talents flowed logically and naturally, playing off what was unique about

Colm. As the characters began to sort of flesh themselves out for me, it became clearer and clearer that their abilities were directly and inherently connected to their respective personalities. Colm's cool and guarded nature was a natural adjunct to his powers to freeze and stop time; whereas Aidan's fiery, perpetual-motion personality was indistinguishable from his power to warm and to create movement. They were—are—the perfect complement to each other.

Steve: Reincarnation is oft-dismissed as something Shirley Maclaine discovered in her medicine cabinet. What are your personal thoughts on the phenomenon?

Dan: One of my favorite sayings on this subject is "We never get it wrong and we never get it done." What that means is that we have unlimited opportunities to grow and expand as living beings and that from a soul perspective, we never tire of those opportunities to re-experience the joy of being alive and continuing to enjoy all that is available to us in this ever-expanding Universe. I believe that our souls understand the beauty and joy of living out a physical lifetime of whatever duration . . . and that we continue to choose that experience for the powerful growth and pleasure that it brings us. I don't believe that we are required or forced to 'come back' to pay off karmic debts or to learn harsh lessons that we failed to learn in previous lives. I believe it's a game that we just never get tired of playing.

Steve: What actors would you cast in the film version?

Dan: To be honest, in my mind's eye, these characters don't look like anybody I've seen. My preference would be to cast two incredibly talented and attractive unknowns in the leading roles and perhaps have some familiar faces playing supporting roles. I think it would make an awesome movie!

Steve: Who was I in a past life?

Dan: My sense is that in some previous life you were a publisher who helped to make me a rich and famous and beloved author . . .