



## Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales

*Fran Friel*

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Nothing good comes of the closest ties in Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales, the new collection from Fran Friel and Apex Publications. Things can go especially awry when the tie in question is the one binding mother and son. This collection contains 14 tales, including the Stoker Award nominated novella "Mama's Boy."

## **Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales Details**

Date : Published June 27th 2008 by Apex Publications (first published June 2008)

ISBN : 9780981639086

Author : Fran Friel

Format : Paperback 277 pages

Genre : Horror, Short Stories, Fiction, Fantasy



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## **From Reader Review Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales for online ebook**

### **Michele Lee says**

Don't let the first story in Fran Friel's collection, Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales, deceive you into thinking this is some sort of "Horror Lite" book. The first story, "Beach of Dreams," is a surreal, exotic tale...

Full review at The Fix: <http://thefix-online.com/reviews/mama...>

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### **Fran Friel says**

A dark and eclectic collection of short stories, novellas, flash fiction and poetry - Bram Stoker Finalist in 2008.

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### **Jane says**

I found it very entertaining, with good imagination. I enjoyed this book of short stories very much.

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### **Daniel Russell says**

I'd heard a lot about this book, and who can be surprised? The featured novella was Bram Stoker nominated...as was this entire collection the following year, just missing out to Stephen King, who you might have heard of.

But does it live up to the hype?

I have to say...I think so. Granted, Fran has a more subtle style than the short fiction I tend to read (Laymon, Little, Ketchum, etc) and indeed, then I tend to write. Things might be light on the gore front for some tastes, but this collection does exactly what it says on the tin. Dark Tales.

The everyday and mundane take on sinister turns (I dare you to look at potato roots and not think about 'Mashed' after reading this).

My preferred stories were those that took you away from the contemporary, such as 'The Sea Orphan', a charming tale set on the high seas. The few pieces of poetry featured are great, and this is from a non poetry lover!

My only criticism was the story 'Gravy Pursuits' was a tad weak with a foreseeable conclusion. But then again, one of the things I liked most about this collection, from reading the accompanying notes, is that these are not works collected over decades. These stories were not printed in a SF magazine in 1975. These are

examples of workshopped stories and the writer trying new things for them, much the same way I like to challenge myself with each novel I write. I think this makes the collection a bit more personal, and lets the reader get in touch with the writer, and the work, a little bit more.

A fine collection. Hat dipped the Apex.

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### **CaroleHeidi says**

2.5\*

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### **Susan says**

Okay, so I should take one star off for the danglers in a few of the stories, given my editor personality. But the stories are raw, often nasty, and not at all shy, and I really like that in my Horror reading. The title novella, especially, is chilling--and that, without any more powerful otherworldly element than its subject's distorted, psychopathic brain. Not for the squeamish, to be sure, but if you're a Horror fan, it's a fine and icky collection. Contains twisted violence, sex, and all that other stuff that makes the genre worth reading.

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### **Nick Cato says**

Fran Friel has been carving her way into the horror genre for the past few years, and while she can get the chills going just fine, I was most impressed by her use of humor. The short back-to-back 'food'-themed entries, GRAVY PURSUITS and MASHED, are both fine examples of humorous horror done right (something this reviewer admires and is constantly on the lookout for).

While I enjoyed Friel's novella, MAMA'S BOY, I believe the highlight here is the nearly-as-lengthy FINE PRINT, which puts a surprisingly fresh spin on the old sell-your-soul story; although it deals with personal characters, there's an epic battle playing out in the background that gives this one a fantastic lift. Kudos also for THE SEA ORPHAN, a killer pirate story that deals with a young man who inherits his mother's witchcraft skills. Being a canine fan, I also loved UNDER THE DRYER, which is told from a dog's point of view (and also happens to be quite creepy).

Although I'm not a big poetry fan, there's some short, sweet, and SICK ones on display here. They'll easily keep your attention, and they act as nice little breaks in-between the tales.

Included in this 14-story/poem collection is a wonderful introduction by Gary A. Braunbeck and some interesting author notes. MAMA'S BOY shows off this rising author's goods and left me quite satisfied...hopefully we'll see a novel soon.

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### **David Agranoff says**

I only know Fran Friel personally in a 21st century way. Having interacted with her for years on various

message boards, websites and e-mail. As soon as Apex Publications published her collection of stories I was sold. Apex is one of the most respected magazines publishing dark fiction of the last decade. It took me a little while to seek out this book, remember this is a independent press, we independent press authors have to rely on our online presence since borders or Barnes and Nobles are not making displays for our books.

Fran is a graduate of the borderlands boot camp and finalist for the Bram Stoker award which is basically the oscar for horror writers. On top of that I discovered that her book came with an introduction by Gary Braunbeck who is a favorite writer of mine. Needless to say I am excited to add this to my collection.

Friel radiates a charming and spunky personality and even in the darkest tales in the book her sense of humor and morality shines through. Case in point is the award nominated title novella which ends the book. *Mama's boy* is a serial killer tale that despite the over saturation of this type of tale has no problem finding an original hook. Mostly told through the killer's therapy sessions the story lends itself to multiple readings.

Other highlights of the collection include the pirate tale "Sea Orphan" and the charming story from the family dog's point of view "Under the dryer." Friel's greatest achievement in the collection might be in the various pieces of flash fiction. These stories show an economy of words that wielded with surgical skill. If you like Horror fiction you can't go wrong here.

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### **Abbie says**

Really couldn't believe the blatant plagiarism of the novel Psycho managed to win any award.

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### **Vince Liaguno says**

Fran Friel is going to make you shudder. And cringe. And look over your shoulder. And when she's done doing all those things a master dark scribe should do, she's going to make you cry. Yes, reading the talented New Englander's *Mama's Boy and Other Dark Tales* – a collection of fourteen shorts ranging in size from flash fiction to novella - is like a therapy session. One can almost see the motherly Friel perched Dianne Wiest-style in her comfy armchair, pen poised over notepad as she explores the darker aspects of the human condition. And at an all-inclusive cover price considerably less than that of the going therapist's rate, you're in for a good deal. But be forewarned: therapist Friel is going to poke and prod the psyche – relentlessly and without compromise.

Read the rest of the review [here](#).

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### **T.W. Fendley says**

If you don't want the voice of a serial killer popping into your mind long after you've put the book aside, this may not be a good choice for you. On the other hand, if you can dwell with the dark side, don't miss following Friel into that murky dimension where the mundane becomes malevolent. You'll never look at dust bunnies and mashed potatoes the same way again.

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### **Meagan Houle says**

I'd never heard of this author until I picked this anthology. The title sounded interesting, and since I love horror in almost all its forms, I thought it'd be a great way to be introduced to her work.

Friel is a solid writer: she won't knock you off your feet with stunning prose, but she avoids a lot of the most common writer pitfalls, and has a healthy knowledge of what is scary, repulsive, and creepy. (Also, her humble and hilarious story notes are worth the read!)

You'll find a bit of everything in here: short stories, short shorts (or flash writing), and even poetry. Whether she's writing microfiction or a sprawling "long" short story, she has pacing down, no question. Some of these tales are just disturbing--"Close Shave" for example--some are just strange--"Beach Dreams"--and some have gratuitous gore, sex, and general grossness in them (the title story, especially). Still, if you have a strong stomach and aren't easily offended (stay away from "Special Prayers" if you're the latter, just trust me) this book should give you a few hours of enjoyment.

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### **Jennifer Fusco says**

Pure psychological horror. I loved it. Any horror fan would find a story to thrill them in this great collection of shorts. A must read!

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