



# *Redstone Science Fiction*

*June 2012 - #25*



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## Editor's Note – June 2012

*by Michael Ray*

RSF #25! In internet lifespans we are practically ancient.

We are proud to have brought so many outstanding stories to our readers and to have provided a professional market for so many outstanding, and largely new, writers.

We have two excellent stories this month from two writers who have bright futures in science fiction, Amy Sundberg and Steven R. Stewart. We are well-known to love space exploration stories and solar system-based futures. [Amy's outstanding story](#) of an ice mining family is just the type of story we love. [Steven's flash story](#) of resistance to authority immediately appealed to the trouble-making streak in both Paul and me. We knew we had to have it for Redstone SF.

For the third summer of RSF we have our [3rd Annual Story Contest with Guest Editor Sarah Einstein](#). This summer we are providing support for the idea of forward-looking, positive science fiction. We encourage SF writers to read Sarah's essay, [Show Us a Better Way](#) and submit a story for the contest. We will open for contest submissions June 15th and stay open until August 15th.

We hope you enjoy these top-notch stories and Sarah's essay. As always, we are appreciative of the support the speculative fiction community has given us here at RSF.

Your friend,  
Michael Ray  
Editor  
Redstone Science Fiction

# Daddy's Girl

by Amy Sundberg

I never wanted to be a spacer. I'd have been happy enough to live out my entire life on Luna, or hell, even a cozy one-family pod somewhere. But Daddy was a spacer and he would be damned if his two girls didn't follow in his footsteps. And what Daddy wanted, he generally got.

I used to pray and pray to whoever might be out there listening, asking that they please take Daddy away and never bring him back. It sounds terrible, doesn't it? It sounds like the kind of thing you don't admit out loud. But I don't have anything to be ashamed of. Anyone would have done the same.

Anyone but Magdalena. She's Captain now, but she was always perfect even before that.

\* \* \*

On an ice ship, you get to know new crew real fast, whether you like it or not. At first Yocavich tried to avoid me as much as he could given the tight quarters. That's how I knew someone had twigged about Greer being my husband, and probably about how I went a little off my head after he was gone, too.

But I actually liked Yocavich just fine. He wasn't anything like Greer, that was part of it. Where Greer would have made a bawdy joke or slapped someone's back, Yocavich stayed determinedly silent. He did his share of the maintenance competently (I double-checked to make sure) and without complaint, but he kept himself to himself.

Of course, he was almost young enough to be my son, and he had no business being the mining engineer on this dump. Not with so little experience. But the Captain did all the hiring. Not me.

After a couple days of him skirting around me, I decided to take the direct approach and invited him to a game of backgammon. Juanita had a vid helmet on, trapped in her own little fantasy world, and Vee and Evan were on exercise detail, so we were pretty much alone. Yocavich bumped his head on the low ceiling on his way to the gaming table—still not used to zero G. What a dirt-eater.

We stayed quiet at first, concentrating on the game. After a few minutes, I'd already hit two of his blots and it was clear his knowledge of backgammon was of the theoretical variety. "So I'm guessing you've heard about my husband Greer," I said, building a new stack in my home quadrant.

He nodded and kept his eyes on the board.

"Just so you know, I don't hold it against you or nothing. You being the new mining engineer and all."

He made a move that left another of his blots vulnerable, and I had to keep myself from shaking my head. “He was a good engineer,” he said, surprising me. “I heard the details from Evan, and from the sounds of it, that blast could have lost you the ship. Or the whole crew. He did you proud, your husband. No one could have done better.”

I nodded, swallowing the lump in my throat. I pushed the dice and got a shitty combo, so I went ahead and did something a little reckless. Yocavich hit one of my blots next turn. Maybe he could play backgammon after all.

After that game, we were friends and I felt better about things.

\* \* \*

I had the engines humming at almost the right pitch. A few screws to loosen, a valve to change, and—there! She was working right where I wanted her.

I shimmied my way out from under the mounts and pushed off the polished surface of the lateral engine. I hitched my elbow around a conveniently placed handle and hovered over my domain, breathing in the slightly sour odor that was more home to me than anything else. I might hate space, but give me a good engine room and I can deal with it.

The com clicked on. “Lolly?” It was Magdalena. She couldn’t leave me alone if her life depended on it. “You about done down there?”

“Aye aye, Captain,” I said. She never failed to miss my sarcasm.

“Come see me when you’re done, will you?” A note of concern laced through her words whenever she talked to me now. It was enough to drive me crazy.

“I’m due for a little R&R.”

“Fine. But come see me first.”

Balls. When my little sister gets her mind made up, there’s no changing it. I pushed the release button on the door, and it opened with a sigh, then closed behind me as I floated down the hall to the silver ladder extending up to the cockpit.

I slipped into the seat next to Magdalena’s. It was comfier up here in the cockpit. The seat closed around me, pinching my middle slightly and adjusting. I checked out the various gauges and displays in front of me while letting my eyes get used to the slightly dimmer light that Magdalena preferred.

She swiveled her seat so she could look at my face. “How you holding up, Lolly?”

She asked me that same question too often, as if she expected me to dissolve into a puddle of water and carbon any day now. “Fine.”

Sometimes she'd let me be after that, but today I wasn't so lucky. "It's only natural for you to be grieving still. I know how you felt about Greer."

Well, no, she didn't. She'd always been a hard-hearted slab, which is what made her the obvious choice for Captain. She took after Daddy in more ways than one. "It's fine," I insisted. I started drumming my fingers against the plastic armrest.

"You know it's been a year today, since...the accident?"

I stared stony-faced ahead. I didn't want to talk about it, not again and especially not with her. If she had listened to me back before that last run and upgraded the engines like I told her to, everything would have been fine. But no, she was too can-fisted to invest in her own operation like she should have. And there was only so fast I could coax our old engines to go. If only we had reached the comet sooner... if only Magdalena had read the spectrograph more accurately... if only our Daddy had been planet-locked to begin with...

My life was a continuous stream of if only's. But none of them brought my husband Greer back to life. "Look, I don't want to talk about it."

Magdalena's mouth turned down. "Fine. Let's talk about the engines then. This trip is taking longer than it should."

I shrugged. "I'm doing the best I can. I keep them limping along, don't I? The main engine should've been replaced three years ago."

"We can't afford anything to go wrong on this run, Lolly. It's bad enough we're breaking in new crew." She meant Yocavich, the only engineer she could find on short notice.

"He doesn't have the experience to be on a boat like ours," I said. "He should be an assistant, not the goddamned head of the whole operation."

"That's none of your concern. Your job is to get us to the comet. Try to crank the engines a little higher. That's all I'm asking."

"How close to the margin are we running?" We'd only been able to haul in half our usual load of ice after the comet explosion that killed Greer.

"Damn it, Lolly." She banged on her armrest. "Focus on your job and let me do mine, okay?"

Her outburst meant we were running very close to the margin indeed. Exactly what I wanted to hear. "Keep your pants on," I said. "I've got those engines running the best I know how." I pushed the button that released me from the seat. "Believe me, no one wants an uneventful run more than me. Worry about Yocavich. He's your weak link." But I knew she wouldn't. She never listened to me. Not even when lives depended on it. And since I hadn't spoken up loud enough, maybe it was partly my fault Greer was dead too.

Magdalena and I grew up in Paradise City on Luna. Our mom had been a dancer, entertaining spacers night after night until she met Daddy. After she got pregnant with me, she switched to hostessing, where she earned less and got sore feet while taking the same abuse. She never did forgive me for that.

After each ice haul, Daddy would come on down and visit us, his jowls giving him a permanent hang-dog expression. It was too expensive to come down to Luna after every run, he'd say. He was ruining himself over his two daughters. But he still came every time.

Magdalena was the baby even though she was taller, and she was the prettier of the two of us. She took after Daddy with her high temper and her knack for getting her own way. I was the awkward one, the one Daddy gifted with huge bruises that shifted from black to blue to a sickly yellow. Anything went wrong, bets were it was Magdalena who caused it and me who got all the blame.

When he died, Daddy left the ice ship to Magdalena. There was nothing for me, not even any more blue-black blossoms. Of course, some bruises can't be seen with the naked eye, but that doesn't mean they're not there.

\* \* \*

The day we made orbit around our comet, Yocavich and I were playing our daily backgammon game. He'd gotten a lot better over the past six months. We both had an even shot at winning now. "You ever miss Luna?" he asked me.

"I used to." I pushed the dice. "Someday I'll settle down dirtside again, I get my way." I moved my blots. "This what you thought you were signing up for?"

He let a few turns pass before he answered. "It's like I thought, mostly. Just the quarters are a little smaller and space is a hell of a lot bigger."

"There's plenty of jobs for you on Luna, with your training." And most of them would be a sight safer than this one, too. "Just something to think about."

His face folded into his shy smile. "Pay is better here, though, long as the ice on this one is pure. I aim to set aside a little nest egg."

Poor sot. What good would money do him if he was too dead to spend it? But before I could open my big mouth, Magdalena's voice blasted through the com. "Lolly, get your butt up here! Radar's picking something up by our comet. It won't be long till we've got a visual, and I want you to see this."

Inside my heart was pounding like an engine gone wrong. "We'll be there soon," I told Yocavich, releasing myself from the chair. His face shone pale in the light of the glowing ceiling.

\* \* \*

“Of all the short-shanked wasting sons of a two-timing whore.” Magdalena pointed at the viewing screen. “What the fuck is he doing here?”

Another ice ship, several meters bigger than ours, was in orbit around the comet. I peered more closely and saw their mining operations were already underway, and not just the survey either; several suited figures floated above the surface of the comet, digging the trenches where flares would eventually be set. The distinctive black ship had a navy blue insignia on the helm marking it as that of Marcos Ramirez, one of our chief business rivals. “Our favorite captain,” I muttered.

Marcos had a beautiful modern ship, sleek and long with a wickedly pointed nose. I’d heard through the grapevine it was loaded to the teeth with all the most progressive tech. He was also the captain who’d played the markets three years ago, costing our crew a bundle when the price of ice tanked right before we arrived with a large haul. If Magdalena was forced to choose her least favorite person in the solar system, Marcos would win, hands down.

Magdalena slammed her fist into her chair, then punched on the com system. A moment later, the screen lit up, showing Marcos reclining in his chair, hands behind his head. “Marcos, you bastard, what the hell do you think you’re doing?” She was practically snarling. “I registered this comet fair and square. Find your own ice.”

“Maggie, sweetheart, so nice to see you again.” Marcos’s thin face twisted into his idea of a charming smile. “I know you have a little crush on me, but I had no idea you’d be willing to travel so far just to catch a glimpse.” He winked.

“Quit messing around and get away from my comet. You’re violating about fifty bylaws, and this time I’ll make sure your license is revoked.”

“I don’t think so, sweet cheeks. Been a bad trip, has it? Is that your sister over there? Hey, Delores, how’s tricks?”

Magdalena braced herself on her armrests and leaned forward into the camera. “I’m prepared to do whatever it takes to make a successful run.”

Marcos’s smile disappeared abruptly, and he sat up straight. “Listen up, Maggie, and listen good.” His voice dropped in a way that reminded me this man was dangerous. “You are outclassed in every way, and you know it. You even think about harming my crew out there and your ship will no longer exist. You get me?”

“What I get is that you’ll be paying off damages to me for the rest of your goddamn life.”

“Oh, I don’t think so.” He reached up to stroke his goatee. “I think you’ll find everything entirely aboveboard on my end. I registered this comet personally. Must have beat you to the punch. I can’t imagine why the system didn’t notify you of my prior claim. But you know how it is. Mistakes happen.”



“You son of a bitch.” Magdalena’s face was bright red, and the distinctive smell of her sweat filled the cockpit. “The other captains will take my side, see if they don’t.”

Marcos shrugged. “I’ll take my chances. This ice is real quality stuff. Worth a risk or two, the way I see it. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a spectrogram to monitor. Always a pleasure, ladies.” He bowed his head at us, and then the screen went dark.

Magdalena’s face contorted, her nostrils flaring. “Nobody steals from me,” she said through clenched teeth. She turned on the ship com. “Yocavich, time to suit up and get out there to survey. Report when you’re ready.”

I stared at her in shock. “You can’t send him out there, Magdalena! We’re outgunned, and he’ll be outnumbered.”

She didn’t even look over at me. “That’s Captain to you,” she snapped. “And we’re not leaving here empty-handed. I won’t lose Daddy’s ship so easy.”

I took another look at Marcos’s deadly ship, hovering silently in dark space. He’d powered up the engines, and they sent a trademark green glow from halfway down the ship. An Upmeister, the latest model. “He’s bringing his weapons online.”

“Thanks for stating the obvious.” Magdalena scowled fiercely at the screen. “Who does he think he’s dealing with? I’m no coward.”

Classic Magdalena, so caught up in fury she’d tossed away all logic. “He has no reason to let us go,” I said. “Who’s ever going to find out if he slags us right now? We need to get out of here.”

She ignored me, instead running a systems check of our own, vastly inferior weapons. I released my seat and pushed myself back to the door. “Lolly, where do you think you’re going?”

I smiled grimly. “We’re not losing another engineer. Not on my watch.” I released the seal on the door and sailed through it before she had time to react.

I found Yocavich outside the launch bay, going through the last of the suit security checks. “I’ll help you take that off,” I said, pushing up beside him. “There’s another ice ship beat us here. Going outside right now would be suicide.”

His eyes widened. “I thought that wasn’t supposed to happen. Didn’t we stake a claim?”

“Something went wrong.” I didn’t elaborate. “We’ll be leaving soon as the Captain comes to her senses.”

He hesitated, one hand closing on his utility belt. “Chief Yocavich.” Magdalena’s voice blared through the com. “Status update.”

“He’s not going anywhere,” I yelled. “Get us out of here before Marcos decides to stop playing nice.”

“Chief Yocavich, do you understand your orders?”

“Yocavich. You ever seen a fist fight in space?” He shrugged, his eyes darting around the curving walls as if looking for a way out. “Of course you haven’t. Because no one is stupid enough to start one.” I put my hand on his shoulder. “I promise, if you go out there, you’ll never come back in. This isn’t what you signed up for.”

He stared at me, then initiated his suit release. His helmet came up with a telltale pop. Magdalena must have heard it over the com because she began to swear. “Goddamn it, Lolly, don’t mess with me right now.” The com shut off with a click.

“Hurry,” I said, helping him unlatch the manual safeties. The suit began unfolding from him as I fidgeted and wished it would hurry up.

I was just helping him clamber out from its slick protections when the door behind me slid open and Magdalena floated in. In one hand she held Daddy’s old revolver aimed squarely at my head.

I positioned myself in front of Yocavich, hanging onto the ceiling handle to keep myself in place. “Now, let’s just all calm down,” I said, putting my spare hand out in a peaceful gesture. “No reason to do Marcos’s work for him.”

“Chief Yocavich, get back into that suit.” She never took her eyes from me.

A familiar feeling of helplessness welled up inside me. Another life on my head. “Let her shoot me,” I told Yocavich. “Don’t put yourself at risk.”

Tension pervaded the cabin. Would Magdalena actually be willing to shoot me? The hum of the life support units had never been so loud.

Yocavich broke first. “If that’s what you want, Captain,” he said, and I glanced over my shoulder to see him moving back to the suit. Magdalena’s lips pulled back in a triumphant smile.

This was my chance. I launched myself forward, pushing off the handle with all my strength, and grabbed for the gun. Whether I took her by surprise or she wasn’t willing to shoot her own sister after all, I managed to grab her hand and knock her off balance. The gun went off as we tumbled backward into the suit lockers, shooting well over my shoulder. I ignored the blows she rained upon the left side of my body and slowly prised the gun from her hand. “You’re insane!” I screamed right into her face. “You’ve failed. You’ve lost Daddy’s ship. Now get a grip and get us out of here.” With one last huge effort, I tore the gun from her grasp and pushed myself away from her.

We glared at each other, both of us panting from exertion. A low moan broke the silence. I glanced over at Yocavich, who was drifting aimlessly, one hand clutched over a blossom of bright red on his shoulder. “Shit,” I said. “You shot him.” I hadn’t been quite quick enough.

“He’ll live,” Magdalena said. She left without another word, leaving me to help Yocavich to the medbay.

\* \* \*

It was a grim six-month trip back to the Moon, during which Yocavich and I played marathon games of backgammon in between his PT exercises and my regular maintenance duties. No share for the crew on this run meant tempers ran high, and only the good discipline of experienced spacers kept the maintenance routine intact. Magdalena spent almost all her time shut up alone in the cockpit.

She finally called for me right before landing. “Marcos’s story checks out,” she said. “He filed his claim only an hour before we did. They’re looking into what went wrong, why we didn’t receive notification, but I don’t think we’ll ever get an official answer.”

“What do you think happened?”

“He found some way to rig the system, of course. I don’t know how he did it, but it has Marcos written all over it.” She grimaced. “I don’t have anything left to fight him with. He’s going to get away with it. I’m signing up on Old Abraham’s ship. Just as normal crew to start with, but we’ll see.” She rubbed her cheek absently. “He doesn’t have room for you, though.”

There was my thoughtful sister, always looking out for me. Although after our altercation over the gun, I hadn’t expected anything else. “Don’t worry about me,” I said. “I’m sure I’ll figure something out.”

“We let him down,” she said, and I knew she was talking about Daddy.

“Yeah, we did.” And it felt damn good.

\* \* \*

During our last game of backgammon, I asked Yocavich if he had plans. I’d been hinting against spacer work for the entire trip back, so I was happy when he said, “No more ice ships for me. I have a few leads on jobs on Luna. The pay may not be as good, but at least I know I’ll get it.” He rolled his shoulder gingerly—it had been out of a sling for a few months, but I knew it still bothered him sometimes.

“Not so exotic after all, the life of a spacer,” I said.

“No shit,” he said, and we both laughed.

I let him win the game. Figured I'd let him leave on a high note.

\* \* \*

I went back to Paradise City to the Vatican Luxury Hotel, the one with all the bright paintings on the ceilings. I tapped on door 357 and waited until it swung open. Marcos stood on the other side. "Delores, baby. Good to see you." He gestured for me to enter.

I sidled through the door without touching him, then stood with my back to the wall, arms folded. "I hear you got paid top dollar for the ice you brought back."

"You heard right." He went to the closet, rummaged around, and came back with a suitcase in his hand. "It's all in there. Your agreed percentage plus the bonus we talked about."

I opened it up on the bed and surveyed the neat rows of titanium bars. "Glad to see you're being honest."

He laughed. "That's what I like about you, Lolly. Your sense of humor. Sure you won't take me up on my offer? I could use someone with your knack for engines."

"I've already got plans, but thanks anyway." Just because I was willing to take his money didn't make him any less of a weasel.

He stuck out his damp hand and gripped mine too tightly. "Nice doing business with you. You staying on Luna awhile?"

"That's the plan," I lied. I'd booked passage out to Mars for later that same day. Just seemed safer out in the boonies, and now I had the funds to set myself up there. I'd be living dirtside at last.

"Maggie ever figure out what a viper of a sister she's got herself?" I shook my head. "The revenge isn't quite so sweet that way, you ask me."

Good thing I didn't ask him. "I'm not interested in revenge," I said. It wouldn't bring Greer back, so I'd take what I could get.

He gave me his weasely grin. "You're a piece of work, all right. I wouldn't have thought you had it in you."

"I guess I'm full of surprises."

I took my money and walked out the door. Magdalena wasn't in any position to hurt anyone else with those reckless decisions of hers, and I was finally turning my back on the spacer life.

It felt damn good.

## **The End**

*Amy Sundberg is a SF/F and YA writer, as well as a musician. Her fiction has appeared in Daily Science Fiction and the Fantastic Tales of the Imagination anthology, among other places, and her essays have been featured on the SFWA blog. She lives in California with her husband, their little dog, her piano, and lots and lots of books. She blogs regularly at [practicalfreespirit.com](http://practicalfreespirit.com) and is on twitter as @amysundberg.*

# The Cold Beyond the Pools

*by Steven R. Stewart*

The shining ones came and took us from the boiling acid pools. They choked us with chains and dragged us wailing from the warmth of our ancestral home. We didn't know how to fight; the pools had always kept us safe. The shining ones lined us up, prodded us with spears, separated families as they grouped us into categories: the men, small, with plain brown shells; the children, pale, almost white, so terrified they stayed curled up tight into balls; and we, the females, the largest and most beautiful.

They made the females pull their carts. I was given the task of bearing their king on his throne—they could only see the beauty of my shell and strength of my limbs; they could not see that I was barren and without status. The king spoke to me often as we travelled, his cruel face full of patronizing admiration for my form. I did my best to shut out his shrill chittering, to keep my trembling legs moving forward. I was so, so cold. If I had known how to beg the king for warmth, I would have.

Our men followed behind in a herd, surrounded on all sides by the tips of spears. Their smaller bodies did not cope well with the temperature. Many of them collapsed, and the shining ones left them behind to dot the plains like boulders. The smaller shining ones played with our children, rolling them around, kicking them. I wondered how many of the children were still alive inside their shells and how many had succumbed to the cold like their fathers.

We walked for weeks. Without the acid of the pools to thin our shells, they grew grotesquely thick. The weight was unbearable. Hinges pinched and grew inward, slicing into our soft parts. The shining ones grew impatient with our slowing pace. We had been in the mountains for days, following a lava flow that ran far down in a ravine. The rising steam reminded me of our home in the pools, the familiar haze, the beautiful oranges and yellows and deep blues that had slickened the chalky earth. I could not feel the warmth rising from the lava through my shell, but the sight of the steam gave me hope. It reminded me that the pools were real, that I hadn't dreamed them, that they were still there waiting to welcome us home.

I forgot myself and began to turn. The spears were on me in an instant, probing at my eyes, clicking off my shell. I did what they wanted and kept walking.

When the snows came, the shining ones used the last of the goats they ate, so they began to eat the few males who had resisted the cold. They took my mate—the one who had remained my mate, even knowing I couldn't bear him young—and began to saw through his overgrown shell. I looked for his eyes, to see if he was afraid, to see him one last time, but his plates had grown over them. I called out to him, bellowing into the sky, but he didn't answer, or if he did, I couldn't hear him. They ate him in front of me, the king nodding his head noncommittally as though still deciding whether he liked the taste or not. I turned my eyes, watched the steam from the lava flow, watched the moons, and slowly, tear after tear, I locked my heart away.

In the morning, when the king climbed aboard and ordered me to move, I did; I pulled with all my might toward the ravine. The king stumbled, clutched his throne, and began shrieking orders

to his men. They swarmed, striking me with their spears, but I felt nothing; my shell had grown too thick. I could hear the other females calling out to me, some begging me not to fight, some praising me for it; a few fought their restraints.

When I reached the precipice, I pulled my body into a ball, hinges creaking, skin tearing. My harness twisted with me, and many of the shining ones got tangled up in its straps and chains.

Then we were falling.

Then I was sinking.

The shining ones' cries faded quickly, followed by the hiss of their frail bodies burning up on the surface of the lava and floating away with the steam. The sounds of battle began up above on the cliffs, but soon, even these were lost to the soothing rumble of boiling lava; it sounded like home.

Slowly, I felt my shell giving way. For a moment, I was warm again.

## **The End**

*Steve grew up listening to his dad's ghost stories and never recovered. He attended Uncle Orson's Literary Boot Camp in 2009 and currently lives in Oklahoma in a small house full of girls. His stories have appeared in Intergalactic Medicine Show, Daily Science Fiction, and others. His nonfiction blog posts have been featured by Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America.*

# Show Us a Better Way

by Sarah Einstein

Okay, let me start off this year's contest call by admitting that I am jumping on a bandwagon, or maybe just chasing after it, since I'm already a little late to this party. This year, I'm asking for work that points to the potential of science to create a better future, but I'm clinging to the coattails of some of science fiction's greatest living writers when I do it. [Neal Stephenson](#) has started his Hieroglyph project, an anthology of hopeful science fiction. [Space Command](#) has become the fastest-funded film in Kickstarter history, in part because of its promise to deliver the "extraordinary dreams of the future" that so captivated its lead writer, Marc Scott Zicree, as a child. (Disclaimer: I am a backer. How could I not be?) In the past two years, I've worked hard to find underdeveloped themes in the genre and encourage writers to explore their potential. This year, I'm adding my voice to the many that have begun asking "Why has science fiction become almost universally dystopian, and what can we do about it?"

In March of this year, Smithsonian magazine featured an article listing ten inventions inspired by science fiction: the submarine, the helicopter, the liquid fueled rocket, atomic power, combat information centers aboard Navy warships, remotely operated mechanical hands called *waldos* after the Heinlein character Waldo F. Jones who created the fictional version, the cellphone, the taser, QuickTime software, and the user-created online "multiverse" Second Life. And while I admit that the taser and the waldo have not significantly impacted my daily life, most of the others have, either directly or by increasing our (and therefore my) knowledge of the universe.

Like many of you, I fell in love with a science fictional version of the possible universe(s) that seemed expansive and full of possibilities for other ways of being, for new and better worlds, for technologies that liberated—rather than enslaved—all people. And, in part, I'm excited to LIVE in the (mostly) better world some of those visions helped to create. My smartphone? It kicks the Star Trek communicator's ass. And not just the one in the original series. My iPad? It does nearly everything a general issue tricorder could do in the original series, and with a better form factor. If someone would build blood work and x-ray apps, it could stand in for the more sophisticated medical tricorder... and I'm not at all certain we won't see some version of that in the near-ish future deployed in hospitals and clinics around the world.

Why, then, when so many of the innovations which define our era come directly from the imaginations of our best science fiction writers, are so few writers today engaged in creating visions of the innovations of tomorrow? (This is a rhetorical question. The reasons are many and varied, and each writer has her own muse to follow.)

You know what I liked best about Star Trek, when I first encountered it as a child? The replicator. Want to know what I liked best about it? The crew didn't have to pay to use it. People could have what they needed—heck, what they simply wanted—and they didn't have to stop first to decide if they could afford it. As someone who grew up in Appalachia (albeit comfortably), the idea that that in the future nobody would have to decide between good food and paying the light bill struck me as the ultimate utopia. In many ways, it still does. I'm a sucker for a good post-scarcity narrative. What would the world look like if everyone had enough food, clean water, medicine, and fuel?



You know the second thing I fell in love with in science fiction? The idea that we could go anywhere. Whether it was with Jules Verne to the bottom of the sea, or Luke Skywalker in a galaxy far, far away, the idea of (as the Redstone motto says) getting off this rock—or deeper into it—seemed the ultimate liberation. And, at least in the books that shaped my early understanding of science fiction, expanding our horizons often also meant expanding our understanding, growing and evolving as a species. Spider Robinson's *Stardance* was one of the first books I bought extra copies of to give to friends. I think I read it in seventh grade, so we're talking about loving a book well enough to spend babysitting money on buying it for other people... and there are few wages harder earned than babysitting money. Sure, we had to prove ourselves to the aliens. That was part of the beauty. Rising to the challenge, showing that we were better as a species than current geopolitics suggested. Becoming that better version of humanity.

So, this year's contest call is perhaps the most open of any so far... all I'm asking of writers is that they show me a hopeful future made better by scientific advancement. Biotech, space travel, deep sea exploration, network technologies, interspecies communication, technologically-enabled abundance... the sort of boon you imagine for humankind doesn't matter. All that matters is that you show us that there is still hope for tomorrow, and remind us that science is likely to lead the way to that better future.

You've got 5000 words in which to show us a better way. And, you know what? I have faith that you can do it, just like I have faith that we're moving toward a future that we would want to live in. We may be taking halting steps, but we are always moving forward.

*We will begin accepting submissions for our [Show Us a Better Way contest](#) on June 15th. It will remain open until August 15th. The Contest address will be [abetterway@redstonesciencefiction.com](mailto:abetterway@redstonesciencefiction.com). We will have a 5000-word limit and 5 cents per word will go to the winning story. Get to work!*

# Show Us a Better Way Contest

## The 3rd Annual Redstone Science Fiction Summer Contest

- 1) Read [Sarah Einstein's column](#) in June 2012, RSF #25 to learn what we are looking for – “show (us) a hopeful future made better by scientific advancement”.
- 2) The contest will open to submissions between June 15 and August 15, 2012.
- 3) The word limit is 5000 words, firm.
- 4) The winning story will be chosen by Guest Editor Sarah Einstein and the Redstone staff.
- 5) The winning author will be paid 5 cents per word.
- 6) The story will be published in the September 2012 issue of Redstone Science Fiction.
- 7) Submission Specifics:

In general, we prefer the manuscript formatting as outlined by [William Shunn](#).

- Double spaced
- 12 pt. Times New Roman or Courier New
- 1" borders
- Name, contact info, and word count at the top of page one
- Title and page number in header

The email:

- in the subject line include: The word “Contest”, your full name, and story title
- in the body include: your name, contact info, word count, and a short cover letter listing your publication history
- attach your story to the email in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Microsoft Word (.doc) format

Send the email to: *[abetterway@redstonesciencefiction.com](mailto:abetterway@redstonesciencefiction.com)*

- 8) Be seeing you.

Yours,  
Michael Ray