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## Luana Monteiro

**Little Star of Bela Lua**  
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**You've lived in Recife, Camaragibe, Florida, and Wisconsin. Are you a woman torn between two countries now, or have you settled into the United States for the long haul?**

I am not torn, but neither am I settled. Wherever I am, I revel in the daily discoveries that come my way. Both Brazil and the United States delight and irritate me in equal measure. I relish the possibility of someday living in yet another country, subjugating myself to culture shock and navigating a different reality.

**Saturnino is first mentioned in "A Fish in the Desert" and later in "Ouroboros;" Padre Miguel is also mentioned in "A Fish in the Desert" and later is the main character in "The Ecstasy of Sao Mercurio;" Dr. Claudio M. is first mentioned in "The Ecstasy of Sao Mercurio" and later in "Curado." What inspired you to link recurring characters in your stories?**

In tying the characters together I attempted to weave a larger tapestry from the small threads of their narratives, hoping that by doing so I could convey a sense of the depth and richness of the Nordeste, which can be considered the main character of the book. I also had a lot of fun making these characters run into each other and take part in each other's folklore. Oftentimes, and this must be true for many writers, a peripheral character in one story eventually demanded a story of their own, and from there things would evolve.

**Were the stories in your book intended to be one cohesive collection, or were they written over the years and compiled here in "Little Star of Bela Lua"?**

The first few were written separately, but once the book was slated to be published, I decided, with encouragement from the editors, to take a more deliberate approach in making the stories cohesive.

**What would you say your characters are searching for?**

They are seeking transcendence from the limitations and constraints placed upon them by culture and circumstance. Put another way, they simply want love, happiness, and acceptance.

**You said once in an interview with *BTW* that the miracles that occur in the "A Fish in the Desert" are made possible by Otalia's perception of the fish, "because she thinks of it as a miraculous being." So is Otalia the one with the powers?**

Not just Otália, but everyone in town. They immediately buy into Clemilda's (the one-eyed gossipmonger) claim of Saturnino's miraculous properties, thereby empowering the fish through their collective faith and desperation.

**"A Fish in the Desert" is set in arid Sertão, Brazil. But according to folklore, the Sertão wasn't always a desert, it was once an ocean. Was this your inspiration for the story?**

There is ample geological and paleontological evidence in the fossil record that the Sertão was once an inland sea: That knowledge echoes in the subconscious of every Sertanejo. It manifests in the general fascination with bodies of water, particularly the ocean (and all its denizens from dolphins to mermaids), which many have never seen. Definitely, this geographic phenomenon inspired me.