

Balticon 44 Poetry Contest Winners

The Veracity of Imagination

Impossible...they once said!
Nothing moves faster than light.
It's beyond the constraints
of the space/time continuum.
Yet now we do it everyday!
Blood and sweat and calculation

sends these behemoths flickering
through the interstellar dark
to emerge beside a farther star.
Human desperation/aspiration
to transcend the static moment,
to deliver any given reality

our FTL-minds can comprehend:
this is the force that drives
our being through the night
and folds the fabric of space.
And as the planes of the plenum
open to us, one way or a dozen,

open like the palm of a hand,
like a wound, like the wings
of the gigantic lepidopteron
of Fretas IV as it first senses
the rays of its blue-white sun,
the unconstrained universe

will be splayed and revealed.
Impossible...they always say,
as they have learned to say.
Meet me in shades of tomorrow,
and remember we are forever
touching the body of space.

1st Place
Bruce Boston
Ocala, Florida

Dreamer

Art by Vonnie Winslow Crist



Page-cats

Between the pages of every book,
they stalk and purr and flex their claws.
However quietly you turn paper over
(your fingertips cat-like themselves)
you will never see them, stroke their pelts.
A paw-print perhaps, may remain,
a tiny fleck of black on white,
where a page-cat once walked,
but never the creature itself.

I have heard that ginger Toms
prefer thrillers, and skeletal Siamese
the slighter homes of verse.
(Although some say black mogs
haunt the now tumbled mansions,
and slapped together shacks of poetry.)
At night, after reading in bed,
you may hear them settle down,
pumping the wordy sheets.

Page-cats eschew magazines.
They can't grip the gloss, and slip
and roam, until a new tome beckons,
and in they stroll, furry bookmarks,
content to live on words and mites,
to smooth out all errant dog-ears
with meticulous sand-paper tongues.
Perhaps a lucky, unknown few, who die
with a favourite book open may glimpse

a page-cat's tail, quivering at sight's edge;
sweet hyphen joining now to somewhere.
They follow the beckoning flag and go on to read
invisible books punctuated by ten billion stars.

2nd Place
P.S. Cottier
Canberra, Australia

A Dragon in Winter

My fire gone out, I lurch and coil
up barren hills and down, my scales
the color of the pewter sky.

In this bleak winter there's no work for dragons
—no armored knights ride out from Camelot
in search of glory and the grail.

What combat when my passion flamed,
igniting theirs! what groans and prayers
and clang of steel, what hisses!

All gone: no magic in great forests,
no leafy bowers, no dwarfs, no saints
or virgins waiting love.

Snows fall, winds blow, sleet scours earth
of dragon tracks. In a deep cave
I'll rest these ancient bones,

find sleep where none will hear
the rattles of my death
or find my dust.

3rd Place
Judith Behar
Greensboro, NC



Horned Dragon

Art by Vonnie Winslow Crist

About the Winning Poets

Bruce Boston (*First Place*)—Bruce Boston's poems and stories have appeared in hundreds of publications, including *Asimov's SF*, *Realms of Fantasy*, *Weird Tales*, and *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, and received a number of awards, most notably the Bram Stoker Award, a Pushcart Prize, and the Asimov's Readers Award. For more info, visit his web site (www.bruceboston.com/).

P.S. Cottier (*Second Place*)—P.S. Cottier lives in Canberra, Australia and has two books to her name; a book of poems called *The Glass Violin* and a short story collection called *A Quiet Day*, both published by Ginninderra Press (www.ginninderrapress.com.au/). She likes to combine a strong tang of the fantastic with mainstream fiction and poetry, a bit like the salt ring orbiting a Margarita.

Judith Behar (*Third Place*)—Having grown up in Brooklyn, NY, Judith Behar taught English at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC, before going to law school and practicing law. She has served as co-editor of an anthology, *Lines from a Near Country*, has had poems published in *Tar River Poetry*, *Crucible*, *Main Street Rag*, and *Broad River Review*, among others, and has led poetry workshops at HopeWell Cancer Support in Baltimore, MD. She resides in Greensboro.

Honorable Mention

Geoffrey Hoffman

Shenley, Radlett, Hertfordshire, UK

Magic

Elizabeth McSoley

Raleigh, NC

Microscope

Jennifer Wang

Southlake, TX

Wolf Man

Marge Simon

Ocala, FL

Painting the Sea

Most Humorous:

Casey Smith

Safety Harbor, FL

The Seagull

Complete Poetry Contest rules can be found at: www.bsfs.org/bsfspetry.htm