

Balticon 48 Poetry Contest Winners

The Detour

Omir, the wily starship commander,
 did not expect to be hovering at twilight
 so close to mermaids
 with eyes like solar flares,
 or to feel the music
 of a buttercup planet
 humming in his veins.
 He thought his men, as well as himself,
 to be light years removed
 from such tripwires of tenderness.
 Suddenly warring against his will,
 the ship descended not far from the water,
 and they watched as mermaids gathered
 in a golden circle around them.
 Perhaps soon the splash of enchantment
 will make all the journeys they had planned
 seem like a ghost trip
 into the void.

Darrell Lindsey
 1st Place – © 2014
 Nacogdoches, TX

Ode to Mars

She waits.

Through lonely nights
 she watched that distant planet
 grow green while she decayed,
 observed, with resignation, the ice melt,
 luscious green grass grow—
 cells divide, multiply, sprout
 and crawl from sea through mud to solid earth,
 far flung seedlings bursting to life.

But beneath her icy surface,
 under red rocks fused
 her mother's breast pulsed,
 and her dreams drifted across empty blue-black
 spaces
 to hover above the green planet.

But the longed-for day arrives!
 Feet tap, hesitant, her dusty bosom,
 the Martian dust lifts, trembling, joyful—
 Her children, at last, are coming home.

Janet Butler
 2nd Place – © 2014
 Alameda, CA

About the Winning Poets

Darrell Lindsey (*First Place*)—Darrell Lindsey is the author of *Edge of the Pond* (Popcorn Press, 2012), and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize (2007) and a Rhysling Award (2014). He won the 2012 Science Fiction Poetry Association Contest (Long Form category).

Janet Butler (*Second Place*)—Janet Butler lives in Alameda with Fulmi, a lovely Spaniel mix she rescued while living in central Italy. "Searching for Eden" was published by Finishing Line Press in January, 2012. "Upheaval" was one of three winning selections in Red Ochre Lit's 2012 Chapbook Contest. Janet recently placed, for the fourth year, in the Berkeley Poets annual poetry contest. She is moderator of the monthly Lit Night at Julie's Coffee & Tea Garden in Alameda and is a member of the Frank

Bette Center for the Arts, where she will teach a poetry course and Italian language class this spring.

Jennifer Ruth Jackson (*Third Place*)—Jennifer Ruth Jackson's work has appeared in *Strange Horizons*, *Liquid Imagination*, and more. She, her husband, and her houseplant live in an apartment in Wisconsin where (two out of three) play video games. Jennifer has yet to beat her plant in any gaming session.

Kaitlyn Graham (*Special YW Award*)—Kaitlyn Graham is a student at Woodbridge Senior High School. She is a National Silver Medalist for poetry in the Scholastic Art and Writing Awards and has been published 10 times by *Creative Communications*. Kaitlyn enjoys writing poetry and script for the theater.

Ritual at Water's Edge

I watched you once, counting bones
 Your breathing spaced evenly like racing hurdles
 As you bound them up in cloth and rope
 So we could take them to the river

The bundle made your back bend low
 Your eyes could only find the soil
 I cast my eyes to the sky to see the blue
 Talking of clouds and bright-light things

We set the bones by the water near sunset
 Washing them with coarse linen, harsh soap
 You began to sing then, the soft death song
 The bones hummed in response to your quiet voice

We tossed them in like large grains of sorrowed rice
 The current greedily swiped your husband's remains
 Starlight found us before we reached home
 I never heard your weeping above the river rush

You watched me once, after that dusk
 Tears making tributaries on your sun-lined face
 As the death song pulsed unwanted in my ears

Shall I sing to your bones now, grandmother?

Jennifer Ruth Jackson
 3rd Place – © 2014
 Antigo, WI

Postcards from the Moon

From a crevice of a crater,
 I wrote my heart on three short lines
 and I put a couple stamps
 on the corner of my postcard

I whispered for the stars—
 beckoned them near so they could hear—
 asked if they would deliver
 my message to you.

I told them it was urgent—
 you had to know I loved you—
 and they promised they would greet you
 before you fell asleep

from that crevice of a crater,
 I saw the planets cross and spin,
 I saw the sun rise over Earth
 and set at the same time,
 I even watched as nebulae fell in love
 amidst kaleidoscope affairs

but never did I witness
 a sight as enthralling as you,
 and I hope as your shaky hands accept
 the gift carried by stars,
 you'll smile as you read
 your postcard from the moon.

Kaitlyn Graham
 Special Young Writers Poetry Award – © 2014
 Woodbridge, VA

Honorable Mentions

"Blue"
Kiarra Lynn Smith
St. Louis, MO

"Astral Lullaby"
James Ph. Kotsybar
Lompoc, CA

Complete Poetry Contest rules, previous
 winners, and entry form can be found at:
www.bsfs.org/bsfspoetry.htm.