

Balticon 50 Poetry Contest Winners

Quitting Spell

First, you must master astral projection
to cast your inner addict into space
with her sultry voice and predilection
for bad boys, dirty mouths, and ripped, black lace.

Fly her all the way to Andromeda.
Get her whiskey drunk at a dim dive bar.
Sing lullabies to quash her insomnia.
Leave through the maze of black holes and stars.

Don't let her lure you with her heavy sighs
back to her bed of interstellar dust.
She'll swindle your money, then by and by,
You'll cough up years of smoke and lust.

When you miss her, imagine what became
of that lurid girl, of all her old flames.

Shannon C. Ward
1st Place – © 2016
Fayetteville, NC

Putting Out the Stars

Putting out the stars one by one
is a long job for the Star Douser,
carrying his great snuffer, brushing away
worlds and killing the light.
He hears the extinction as 'phut'
when a sun dies; does not hear at all
the ululations of the surrounding life.
Those sounds do not last long anyway.
He has his own sense of time
(not ours. He is far away and nothing
for us to worry about for ages);
settles down after a good length of work,
eases his aches, and dreams of perfect
darkness, the time when every star
has been annihilated; the time,
he believes with every particle of his being,
before a new, startling, epiphanic
day will dawn.

Cathy Bryant
2nd Place – © 2016
Disley, Cheshire East
United Kingdom

Enter the Annual Balticon Poetry Contest!

1. Entries should address the themes of science fiction/fantasy/horror/science.
2. 1st prize: \$100; 2nd prize: \$75; 3rd prize: \$50. Additional awards may be authorized at the judges' discretion.
3. Limit: 3 poems/person, maximum 50 lines each. No entry fee.
4. Winners will receive a cash prize, convention membership and be invited to read their winning entries at Balticon. Attendance at Balticon is not required to win.
5. Please no previously published submissions.
6. Winning poems will be published one time in the *BSFAN*, the Balticon convention souvenir book. In addition, a pdf version of the winning poems as they appear in the *BSFAN* will be available on the Balticon Poetry Contest website. Writers retain all rights to their work. By submitting to the contest, entrants agree to these terms.
7. Deadline: Mailed entries must be postmarked, and e-mail entries received, by March 1. Entries that do not meet this deadline will be considered for the following year. Please include your name, address, phone number, e-mail address & a brief bio with your entry.
8. Entries may be e-mailed to poetry at bsfs dot org or mailed to "Balticon Poetry Contest," c/o BSFS, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. Info: poetry@bsfs.org.

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Pearl

The pig roots up
the shiny bauble
from the end of her rope.
Her handlers are surprised;
usually she finds
coal-colored truffles,
if she finds anything at all.

It isn't the object of their search.
The pig-handler scolds the pig
and jerks on the rope.
His partner pockets the find
in silence.

Later that night
after the campfire is embers
and even the pig snores softly
the partner reaches into his pocket
and pulls out the treasure.

It has been centuries
since anyone has seen metal
worked so finely
with little pinprick holes
and a stem at the top.
Such is the stuff of storybooks.

It twists apart easily,
but only by a finger's-breadth
to reveal a shiny metal cylinder.
that winks in the starlight,
but is otherwise inert.

Perhaps, as his brother thinks,
it is junk.

He douses the embers,
goes back to his bedroll,
drops the shiny bauble
by the tent-flaps.

From deep within the metal
a bright magnesium spark kindles,
grows infinitely fast.

Bright light expands over the camp
and the landscape
and up into the night sky
then fades to dark
and leaves behind
a coal-colored truffle.

Far out in space, from the pinprick stars
they see the brilliant flash of light
for the first time in centuries.

It is a signal
foretold by prophecy.

It is time to reclaim the homeland.

Ryan E. Holman
3rd Place – © 2016
Kensington, MD

Balticon 50 Poetry Contest Winners

Calling All Heroes

I wanted to be an astronaut.

The future! Bold titanium fallacies!
There are L.A. nights now:
jacuzzi tubs and glitter nail polish.
The atmosphere is tomato soup,
the 2 AM clientele drinks themselves drowned.

It's a symbiotic relationship with space.
The stars fill our veins with nourishment;
we coddle their vanities with poetry.

There are sun soldiers,
drifting in a tin can beyond the gravity of Mercury.
They know they'll be ashes in the morning.
They hurtle on, undaunted.
Their Apollo propaganda radiates
through the cosmos.
It ripples to Earth:
calling all heroes!

I wanted to be an astronaut.
Poetry is almost a consolation.

Kaitlyn Graham
Special Young Writers Award – © 2016
Woodbridge, VA

Scales of Glory

Stark white against the night sky
Your leathery wings beat with my heart's rhythm
Breath as frozen as winter's peak
Only fools deny your will

Silent, you rise, intent upon your prey
Only to dive into the depths
Resplendent in life's armor
Talons poised to strike

Blood spilled feeds new life
Slakes the frozen desire for heat
It radiates outward
Staining your scales

Tipped in red, you launch into the sky
With the rising of the sun
A burst of light
To end the darkness

A. L. Kaplan
Honorable Mention – © 2016
Laurel, MD



HAVE FUN, LEARN, SHARE, GROW, PLAY We play games...
Our main goal is to have fun.
We welcome all gamers from novice to experienced.
We play games of all kinds, but mostly board games and card games.
We are all very flexible and easy to get along with.
We have members of all ages and from various gaming and non-gaming backgrounds.

Join us for ALPHABET SOUP sessions at the beautiful BSFS Building in the
Highlandtown section of Baltimore City every 2nd and 4th Sunday noon to 6PM.

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Comatose

What value have tears
without prisms?
Infinite color coming from sorrow,
trembling on lashes
to reshape the world
with a sigh.

A golden casket holds my heart.
Fine rubies with a tiny lock
enameled cloisonné
in rainbow colors
camouflage the missing key.
My brain is trapped within
a crystal belljar,
alienating its electrons
should they
dare to shatter glass.
Other parts are scattered.
Eyes on Saint Lucia's plate
sowl with browless synergy
to glimpse another sunrise,
overseeing lips
pressed like faded violets
within the vellum of an
ancient text that stilled
fingers yearn to turn,
yet they themselves are stranded
amidst paintbrushes upon a
windowsill in spider's silk.

But my soul rides on
a firefly outside this room
that knew me well,
and blinks its feeble light
until tomorrow.

Mara Buck
Honorable Mention – © 2016
Windsor, ME

About the Winning Poets

Shannon Ward (*First Place*)—Shannon Ward is author of the poetry chapbook, *Blood Creek* (Longleaf Press, 2013). Her work has received generous support from Yaddo, Norton Island, the Brush Creek Foundation, and the Anderson Center, and her poems have appeared in many excellent journals, including *Great River Review*, *Superstition Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*.

Cathy Bryant (*Second Place*)—Cathy Bryant has won 22 literary awards, and her work has appeared in over 200 publications. Cathy's books are: *Contains Strong Language and Scenes of a Sexual Nature*, *Look at All the Women*, *How to Win Writing Competitions* and *Pride & Regicide*. See Cathy's listings for cash-strapped writers at www.compsandcalls.com.

Ryan E. Holman (*Third Place*)—Ryan E. Holman has previously had poetry appearing in the *Silver Spring/Takoma Park Voice* and has been featured in the Third Thursday Takoma Park Reading Series in May 2007 & November 2008. She also read at Artomatic 2009. Ryan has reclaimed her creative voice following grad school and enjoys writing about everyday and fantastic life through the lens of the elements.

Kaitlyn Graham (*Special Young Writers Award*)—Kaitlyn Graham is a junior in the Center for Fine and Performing Arts at Woodbridge Senior High School. Her writing is inspired by her favorite writers, Robert Scott, Margaret Atwood, and Ray Bradbury. When she's not writing, Kaitlyn likes to watch movies and play Sudoku.

A. L. Kaplan (*Honorable Mention*)—A. L. Kaplan's work has been included in several anthologies, including *Young Adventurers: Heroes, Explorers And Swashbucklers* and the 2014 and 2015 issues of *Dragonfly*. She is the president of the Maryland Writers Association's Howard County Chapter and holds an MFA in sculpture from the Maryland Institute College of Art. When not writing or indulging in her fascination with wolves, A. L. is the props manager for a local theatre. Visit: alkaplan.wordpress.com or Twitter: [@alkaplanauthor](https://twitter.com/alkaplanauthor).

Mara Buck (*Honorable Mention*)—Mara Buck writes and paints in a self-constructed hideaway in the Maine woods. She has been awarded/short-listed by Faulkner-Wisdom, Hackney, Carpe Articulum, and others. Her work has appeared in *Drunken Boat*, *The Huffington Post*, *Crack the Spine*, *Blue Fifth*, *Writing Raw*, *Pithead Chapel*, *Apocrypha*, *Maine Review*, *Tishman Review*, *Linnet's Wings*, *The Lake*, and *Whirlwind*, plus numerous print anthologies.